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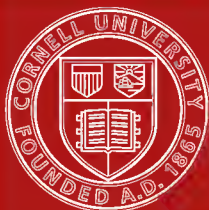
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Doctrines of Unitarians examined, as opp



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THE DOCTRINES OF UNITARIANS EXAMINED, AS
OPPOSED TO THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

IN

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCXVIII,

AT THE

LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M.A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

BY

THE REV. C. A. MOYSEY, D.D.

RECTOR OF WALCOT, BATH; CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD
RODNEY, AND LATE STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH.

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1818.

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EXTRACT

FROM

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.



—— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and
“ Estates to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scho-
“ lars of the University of Oxford for ever, to
“ have and to hold all and singular the said
“ Lands or Estates upon trust, and to the in-
“ tents and purposes hereinafter mentioned;
“ that is to say, I will and appoint that the
“ Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford
“ for the time being shall take and receive all
“ the rents, issues, and profits thereof, and (after
“ all taxes, reparations, and necessary deduc-
“ tions made) that he pay all the remainder to
“ the endowment of eight Divinity Lecture
“ Sermons, to be established for ever in the said
“ University, and to be performed in the man-
“ ner following:

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first
 “ Tuesday in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly
 “ chosen by the Heads of Colleges only, and by
 “ no others, in the room adjoining to the Print-
 “ ing-House, between the hours of ten in the
 “ morning and two in the afternoon, to preach
 “ eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year fol-
 “ lowing, at St. Mary’s in Oxford, between the
 “ commencement of the last month in Lent
 “ Term, and the end of the third week in Act
 “ Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight
 “ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached
 “ upon either of the following Subjects—to con-
 “ firm and establish the Christian Faith, and to
 “ confute all heretics and schismatics—upon the
 “ divine authority of the holy Scriptures—upon
 “ the authority of the writings of the primitive
 “ Fathers, as to the faith and practice of the pri-
 “ mitive Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord
 “ and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity
 “ of the Holy Ghost—upon the Articles of the
 “ Christian Faith, as comprehended in the
 “ Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight
 “ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be always

“ printed, within two months after they are
“ preached, and one copy shall be given to the
“ Chancellor of the University, and one copy to
“ the Head of every College, and one copy to
“ the Mayor of the city of Oxford, and one
“ copy to be put into the Bodleian Library ; and
“ the expence of printing them shall be paid
“ out of the revenue of the Land or Estates
“ given for establishing the Divinity Lecture
“ Sermons ; and the Preacher shall not be paid,
“ nor be entitled to the revenue, before they
“ are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person
“ shall be qualified to preach the Divinity Lec-
“ ture Sermons, unless he hath taken the de-
“ gree of Master of Arts at least, in one of the
“ two Universities of Oxford or Cambridge ;
“ and that the same person shall never preach
“ the Divinity Lecture Sermons twice.”

SERMON I.

ON MYSTERIES.

HEB. iii. 12.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

IN this land, where by the blessing of God the enjoyment of religious as well as of civil liberty is secured to all men, where restraint is laid upon the avowal of opinions no farther than is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of good order both in Church and State, it is the more necessary that such opinions should be observed with attention; and that tendency to extravagance which too often springs out of liberty be prevented, if possible, from producing the destructive effects of disorder and licentiousness. In all matters is this necessary, but more especially in

those which have regard to religion ; religion, which is the greatest source of blessing that mankind enjoys, when it is preserved pure, and uncontaminated by the extravagancies of human invention, as it is the most powerful engine to produce fatal effects, when corrupted by the conceit, and debased by the inventions of man.

I propose therefore to bring under our present examination the principles of a sect, which is daily striving to advance itself, and to introduce such disorder, by overthrowing the very foundations of the Christian faith : I mean the sect of Socinians, or, as they style themselves in these days, Unitarians.

That impunity which the Legislature has formally granted to them of late, appears to have awakened their hopes, and aroused their activity ; and it is therefore the duty of the appointed ministers of God's word to meet their efforts by corresponding exertions, to detect the fallacy of their assertions, and to prevent, so far as we can, the mischief of their opinions from gaining farther ground.

Unitarianism is not indeed calculated to become easily a favourite doctrine with the *common* people, but it catches the vain, and those who are confident in their own abilities and discernment. It is a speculative faith, if indeed that may be called a faith which is rather a system of *unbelief*. It relates to a most mysterious question, one which requires that which is not given to it so often as might be wished, a patient investigation; an unpresuming judgment; and a true humility, and submission of the weak understanding of mortals to the revealed, though incomprehensible, doctrines of the Most High.

But there is a shew of simplicity in Unitarianism, which is not unlikely to make impression on the minds of those who regard it superficially; of those in particular, who have made just such advancement in learning as suffices to give them confidence; and whose period of life makes them bold to engage themselves on the side of any novelty which calls itself amendment, and to follow the leading of a course, to which the name of liberality,

so often and so sadly abused in these our days, is applied by its upholders.

The shaking off of ancient prejudices has to many a flattering sound; and there is something plausible to the inconsiderate, in the idea of rejecting mysteries; of bringing down religion to that which Unitarians now call, and Deists always have called, its original simplicity.

But mysteries are in themselves no objection to the doctrine which contains them; more especially when, as in regard of the holy Trinity, the mystery relates to the incomprehensible nature of God. Do we suppose him able to reveal nothing that we cannot fully comprehend? This were to put our capacity on a level with that of the Almighty.

Analogy requires, that since in the system of the natural world so many things pass our comprehension, much more should the same be the case with the heavens and their Creator; where God is not only the revealer of the mystery, but his own inconceivable nature is also the object revealed.

The question here then is not, which party can *frame* a creed most plausible, or most agreeable to human notions of that which is proper and intelligible; but, which follows that creed which ought ever to bind us, because it already exists in the unerring word of God. It is a question not of ingenuity, but of testimony.

The Unitarians do not, like the Deists, profess to reject all revelation. With them therefore the holy Scriptures, though partially discredited, are yet in general an authority which cannot be disputed; and from them alone I am confident that all the points in question between us may be abundantly proved. To that authority the speculations of mortal fancy must bend.

It is not for us to reject mysteries because they are incomprehensible, nor can that pride of human intellect, which sets itself up to measure the hidden things of God, be justified by the rational, nor endured by the religious mind. The point to be examined by us is simply this, whether or no the matter offered for our belief be offered by the Almighty. If it be so,

the case admits no farther question. Implicit belief then becomes a bounden duty.

This however is a point which our adversaries will not concede, and declamation against “prostration of the under-
“standing” is employed by them, as if it were allowable to set up the understanding against him who made it; as if the faculties of created beings were to sit in judgment on the acts of their omnipotent Creator, who gave and who limited those faculties.

We shall however have abundant opportunity for entering more fully into this question in the course of these Lectures. It is perhaps with many the chief cause of infidelity, that they have neglected the Apostle’s advice, “not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly.”

Such meekness and humility is a duty which all *Christians* acknowledge to be incumbent on themselves; and whatever others may do, we shall depart from our

^a Belsham’s Letter to the Bishop of London, p. 75.

own professions if we desert them. For what is the profession of him who calls himself a Christian? What is its real value, if, at the same time that he so calls himself, he deny and reject the Godhead of Him from whom we derive that name.

What the faith of Christians is has long since been known and established. It acknowledges, that our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, is God and man. God, in identity with the Godhead of the Father, united with the manhood inherited from his mother. The Christian faith does not barely admit, that there was once a person called Jesus Christ upon earth, a teacher of righteousness sent from God, and now rewarded with a high degree of exaltation in heaven; but still, with all this, no more than a creature. A Christian is not at liberty to take so much of the faith as he may think proper, and to reject the rest; to embrace the morality and refuse the doctrine, nor to adhere to the doctrine and reject the morality of the Gospel. No man can be called a Christian, even in profession, unless he hold, not only that

Christ existed as the man Jesus here on earth, but that he was very God at that very time; that his Godhead had existed, in identity with the Father as to being and power, from all eternity, though with distinction as to person; and that he shall so exist till time shall be no more. This we hold to have been the faith of Christians as to the Person of our blessed Saviour from the beginning, and this the Unitarians deny. Whether the truth rest with them or with us will be matter for future discussion, but that such a faith is of necessity attached to the name of Christian can hardly be disputed. Let all who are captivated by the sound of freedom in opinion, and the boast of those which some call exclusively rational principles, consider to what those principles are leading them; even to the denial of him whom God has declared to be our Lord, our Saviour, and our God. Let them not rely on the sound of a name superadded, in order to affix an opposite and arbitrary sense to the appellation by which that sect distinguishes itself, which absolutely denies

the Godhead of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Ghost. The same has formerly been done by unbelievers, who affected to talk of Christian Deists, and Christian Jews.

The name of Unitarian Christians, if to the term Unitarian that sense be attached which they affix to it, is a contradiction in terms. It confounds believers in Christ's Godhead with those who absolutely deny that Godhead. It professes that they who bear that name are hoping for salvation through his sacrifice of atonement, and his mediation, as consequent and dependant thereon; while they are denying the efficacy of that sacrifice, and reducing his mediation to nothing more than the prayers of a prophet and righteous man. Even Mahomet allowed as much as this, for he professed that he requested Christ's prayers for himself, and he ascribed to him pre-eminence above Moses and all the prophets. And what do modern Unitarians more than this? The *man* Jesus, as a mere man, who had no manner of existence before his birth at Bethlehem, who was *not*

the Saviour who purchased us by his blood, who was *not* the appointed sacrifice to atone for sins, who was *not* the eternal Son of the Most High: such is the person whose existence they acknowledge!

They grant indeed that Jesus Christ bore a special mission from God, and that he is now miraculously exalted to preeminent honour at God's right hand. But where does it appear in the Gospel that this is all which his disciples are required to believe? What great preeminence does this assign to him, above others whom we know to have been taken up into the presence of God? Such pretences are mere deception; and the addition of a highly respected name is but too much like a shield to cover their real tenets, and a snare to draw in the unguarded to the destructive errors of their communion.

Even the heresy of Arius came nearer to the true faith than this. For it allowed the Godhead of our Saviour, and his existence before his incarnation, though not from all eternity. But the Unitarians deny both. Yet did the general assembly of

the whole Christian Church condemn his doctrine, and stigmatize it with their anathema. I do not urge the sentence of that Council as of equal authority with the holy Scriptures, by which the measures of that, and of every other assembly of frail and fallible men must be judged. But it distinctly proves what was the sense of the great body of believers, at a time when corruptions were not so common but that they were examined and censured; and so near to the Christian era, as to be comparatively but little removed from the age of the Apostles themselves.

At that period human presumption had not become so fertile as in these days, in inventing corruptions of the Christian faith; and in that Council those Fathers of the Church assisted, who were most likely to know what had been the teaching of the Apostles themselves; whose opinions therefore, though not infallible, have ever been accounted as entitled to the highest respect.

Against the judgment then of the primitive Church, and, what is much more, against the express words of Scripture,

from which we derive our doctrine, does this sect maintain opinions derogatory in the greatest degree to our blessed Saviour; and it spares no pains in disseminating opinions, which, if received, would degrade him from the Divine supremacy, to the condition of a mere mortal, a servant, a frail being, capable of moral corruption and of sin, equally with ourselves.

That the audacity of man should broach such opinions is unhappily no matter of wonder. But that they who do thus should assume the very name which they labour to bring to nothing, is a proof of something very different from zeal for the truth. All who have *well* examined their tenets can judge of their names and professions; but in regard to others, it may well be feared lest the name should sometimes answer the purpose for which it is assumed, by putting them off their guard against the insidious practices of the Unitarians; lest it should lead those who do not inquire much into the matter, to conclude that there is no reasonable apprehension of danger to the Christian faith,

from those who assume an appellation which belongs, in truth, only to its sincere and faithful followers.

What is the object which they profess? What do they hold out as their avowed intention? To “inculcate the rational principles of religion, and the necessity of free inquiry, on topics essential to the best interests of man, as well for the world that now is, as for that which is to come.” None surely who consider this can be drawn in by the sound of its first words—Do not we know what has been in former times the abuse of similar language? What has been always the plea of Infidels and Deists? Rational principles, and free inquiry. The old title of Freethinkers might alone lead us to suspect the relation between the two parties.

I do not mean to assert that the Unitarians now hold *all* the same principles with the Deists, but that they hold that one which leads to them all, the supremacy of human reason, and its competency to accept or reject even the dictates of Omnipotence.

They lay great stress on “making persons of every class to comprehend and feel the dignity of their nature, and judge for themselves, of the principles upon which the duties enjoined are founded.” But this magnifying of the dignity of human nature is the very language of pride, and shews but little proficiency in Christian knowledge, as it was taught by him from whom alone we all profess to derive it. “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me,” were his words, “for I am *meek* and *lowly* in heart, and ye shall *find rest unto your souls*.”

They who will not abide by any thing which they do not comprehend, must assert, that all which is above our comprehension is untrue; or, at least, that they are justified in treating it as if it were untrue. And what is this but to make mortal intellect the measure of Divine truth? What, but to set up imperfect and very limited faculties to judge of the acts and counsels of the infinite and perfect Jehovah? What, but to say in the pride of our hearts, so soon as we meet with any thing

in his declarations which we do not satisfactorily comprehend, Hitherto will I go, and no farther?

Let us, for the sake of common sense and reason; let us first perfect our knowledge of earthly things; of our own nature, and of all the created universe. How weak, how erroneous are all our speculations even there! How soon are we compelled to acknowledge that we see effects, whose most immediate causes we cannot discern; that we find ourselves to be parts of a system, the laws of which, except where revelation has aided us, we comprehend but in a small degree! Nor can we account for many of the wonderful productions or operations of nature, except by referring them at once to God; whose work - we know them to be, though we know not the course and method of his workmanship. The truly wise man will be the most ready to exclaim with Solomon, "Hardly do we guess aright at the things which are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things which are

“ before us ; but the things which are in
“ heaven who hath searched out ? ”

Such being the case, the Church of England, which does not disdain prostration of the understanding before the unsearchable mysteries of God, which is contented to go to that extent which he has laid open, and to stop where his light ceases to guide us farther : our Church is ready to give its belief to this great mystery of a Trinity in Unity, because, though not fully explained, it is yet certainly declared, by Him to whom alone it could be known. Though life and immortality are unquestionably brought to light by the Gospel, yet it is, in this our mortal state, only such light as may serve to guide us to that immortality. The perfection of knowledge can not belong to an imperfect state of being.

If however religion be now rendered in all respects so very simple a matter, and so much within the compass of every man's intellect, that we may reject any duty, or any point of belief, however positively enforced, provided that we disapprove it ;

then are we all now far wiser than the wisest of antiquity, who admitted their inability to comprehend such things without a revelation from God. If it be necessary that *all* should be thoroughly fathomed by our reason, before we need to believe it, what means St. Paul, when he says, “^b That “ your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God?” Or what is this saying of the same Apostle, “^c We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, — which *none* of the princes of “ this world knew; for had they known it, “ they would not have crucified the Lord “ of glory?” What is this, but a declaration, that man is *not* able to discover the whole of God’s mysteries, of which this is the chief?

Yet since the Most High has declared these things to us, though they be only in part intelligible, we are bound to receive and to admit the whole. It may be called unworthy of the dignity of our nature so to do; but we must either receive them with-

^b 1. Cor. ii. 5.

^c 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

out comprehending, or we must dare to reject his word which enforces them. In this mortal state there will be many things hidden, “the secret things of God;” but we must nevertheless submit to receive them, unless we would be wise above the measure which he has allotted to us. “^d The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither *can* he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned.”

So long as these adversaries of the received faith reject with scorn all prostration of the understanding, even before the throne of God, there is little or no hope of reclaiming them from their errors. The very snare of Satan, that same snare which entangled Eve, and led to all our woe, is, and always has been, wrought from our conceit and presumption. The right of human judgment in opposition to Divine revelation, was the temptation held out in that case: “^e In the day ye eat thereof, then your

^d 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^e Gen. iii. 5.

“ eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be *as gods, knowing good and evil.*” And the ambition of doing what is right in our own eyes is, and has ever been, a most fatal snare to human vanity.

But let not them say, and let not others imagine, that Religion has nothing to do with Reason, because it is asserted, that Reason could never of *itself* have discovered the secret things of God, and is bound to receive them as revealed by him, though it be unable fully to comprehend them. The province of Reason is not to scrutinize the Divine essence, nor to pry into matters which must of necessity be far beyond the reach of our limited faculties. Its business on these points is to examine the credibility of the Revelation, so far as regards the testimony which is to prove that it proceeded from the Almighty. It has nothing to do with comprehending things incomprehensible: but if, upon full inquiry, it find that the doctrine be revealed by the word of the Lord, Reason must bow before his authority which sanc-

tions that doctrine. Reason is thankful for such insight into celestial matters as is given, though only to a certain extent, and does not presume to press beyond the limits which must ever confine it. Our knowledge of the Divine nature is now only partial; enough to shew the infinite distance between it and our own; enough to call forth our awe and veneration. "Now we know in part;" and whoever has learned true Christian humility will be contented with that limited part, which is adapted to our limited abilities. In the next life, the faithful will be rewarded with the full understanding of all, which they have believed now, though they did not entirely comprehend it. " 'Blessed,' said our Saviour, "are they who have not seen, "and yet have believed." What they now receive on his authority, though they cannot comprehend it, will then be fully made clear to their enlarged and perfected capacities. " § Now we see in a glass darkly,

† John xx. 29.

§ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

“ but then face to face. Now we know in
“ part, but then shall we know even as also
“ we are known.”

Let man then restrain his impatience till the consummation of all things. Let him not, before his nature be perfected, expect to attain to the perfection of knowledge; lest such presumption, far from bringing him nearer to the object of his desire, should utterly exclude him from those privileges, which shall belong hereafter to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to them alone.

The great evil which leads, and always has led to infidelity, is the setting up of human reason as the measure of truth; whereas it is only the measure of that testimony whereby the truth is declared. The matter itself which is proposed to us may be utterly beyond the reach of our faculties, as the matter here in question, the Divine nature, is, and always has been; and while this world endures, always shall continue to be.

Man has no sort of right to doubt the possibility of God's existence, in any man-

ner which he shall be pleased to reveal. Man does not understand *his own* nature, and much less the incomprehensible nature of the infinite Godhead. When things are thus necessarily beyond the reach of human understanding, the authenticity of the revelation which makes them known is all of which we are competent to judge.

The certainty that these truths are really and distinctly revealed, though they be not entirely laid open and made familiar to our capacities, is certainty enough, and ought to produce complete conviction. Such certainty must spring from due inquiry into the authenticity of the revelation. It depends chiefly on the consistency of the present, with previous communications from the same source; which is one sort of testimony: and to this our Saviour himself appealed, when he said, “^h The works that I do, they bear witness of me.” “ⁱ Search the Scriptures, for, — they are they which testify of me.” The other testimony lies in the cha-

^h John x. 25.

ⁱ John v. 39.

racter and consistency of those, from whom the witness proceeds; and that is in this case unquestionable.

The Unitarians, as they love to call themselves, falsely implying thereby, and indeed asserting, that we are Tritheists; these Unitarians do not deny the testimony, as to its authenticity, but endeavour rather to wrest the words in which it is conveyed, and so to support themselves in their denial of the doctrine which it inculcates. But let Christians ever remember that of our ownelves we can do nothing. Let them never allow themselves to suppose that human reason is to fathom every depth, and that we are not bound to admit any thing which we cannot clearly comprehend. Let us beware of admitting generally the evidence of the holy Scriptures, only that such admission may give the more weight to objections afterwards urged in detail against the most important particulars; and let us not pervert and torture the obvious sense and plain interpretation of God's word, rather than break down the prejudices with which pride in-

spires the heart of man. This is no unfair insinuation, no misinterpretation of the language of Unitarians, nor any conclusion violently extracted from expressions, which were not designed to bear it. What are the very words of their own advocate, on the point of prostration of the understanding before the inscrutable mysteries of God? “^k Prostration of the understanding,” says he, “God forbid! If any one had charged us with admitting as a revealed truth, as a doctrine of Jesus, a proposition which previously to its reception required a prostration of the understanding, we should have regarded it as a calumny more absurd, and more injurious, than any which the ingenuity of our bitterest enemies has ever yet invented.”

The very point on which this prostration of the understanding was required, is the nature of God, in regard to the Trinity in Unity. These Unitarians are not called to submit their intellects to any thing *understood*, and so ascertained to be absurd,

^k Belsham's Letter to the Bishop of London, p. 75.

but to a doctrine, which, though it be avowedly beyond the utmost stretch of mortal faculties to comprehend it, is nevertheless well authenticated as having proceeded from the Almighty, as shall be demonstrated : a doctrine, which is to be received as one of the secret things, by which God tries our faith. But it is supported by such testimony, as may well convince our reason, of all which reason is able to examine and decide; namely, that it is sent from God.

The testimony to this doctrine is so direct and convincing, that Unitarians, in the pride of their heart, have set their own fancies above God's word; and, in order to get rid of its evidence, have expunged and altered many passages which bore witness to it most copiously. Foul methods indeed by which to hide an error, whether they were thrust upon the adoption of them by vanity, or by obstinacy!

I will however no farther anticipate my subject, but, having thus opened the general question, will endeavour in my subsequent discourses to examine severally the

articles held by this party; as well those which constitute the main hinge of the controversy, as the other subordinate points which they hold in opposition to the Christian faith.

The first is, that there is one God, “and “one only Person in the Godhead;” and connected with this is one of their negative articles, in which they deny absolutely, and in no very decent terms, (as is too much their practice,) a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead.

And it is necessary throughout this question to keep it constantly in our recollection, that the Church invariably and most strictly maintains the Unity of the Godhead. When it asserts the personal distinction of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, it does not lose sight of the first article which is the foundation of all the rest, namely, that “there is but one living and “true God.”

As is the case with all works, so the whole confession of faith published in the Articles of the Church of England has a right to be considered as one composition.

That composition is consistent with itself. Its parts were intended to agree with each other, as parts in one system, and as deduced from one source: and the first, the very head of all, was certainly kept in view, while those which follow, especially those which immediately follow, were composed. The question is not of the number of Gods, but of the number of Persons who exist in one sole Godhead. Nor does the incomprehensibility of the doctrine at all affect its truth. The whole subject of the controversy stands totally distinct from the question, whether a Trinity in Unity be, or be not, comprehensible to us; for both parties hold alike that it is not. But we have to examine whether the objections made to that doctrine be or be not well founded; and the whole matter turns on its divine authority, not on our capacity of comprehending it.

They assert, secondly, that our blessed Saviour was a mere human being; and they deny that, which our Church never asserted, a subordinate Creator, &c. And

farther, they positively reject the most important doctrine of the Atonement.

Thirdly, they reject the personality of the Holy Spirit.

After these shall have been discussed, I propose to examine their admission, that Jesus Christ is to be the universal Judge, he yet being according to them a mere man.

Fifthly, we will consider their doctrine as to the inspiration of the holy Scriptures, and the respect which they have in reality shewn to them.

And lastly, we will consider their denial of the eternity of punishment to condemned sinners.

I have followed, throughout this arrangement, the order of that confession which was published by one of their present leaders¹, in his Letter to the present Bishop of London; wherein it is fair to conclude, that the avowed doctrines of the sect are contained. I propose now to pro-

¹ Belsham.

ceed, with God's help, to the examination of those doctrines regularly and minutely. But I hope to avoid that offensive levity and indecency of style, which is too often perceptible in their pamphlets; a style, in which it is unbecoming to treat any question acknowledged by all parties to be of the highest importance; and which has too often betrayed them into language, shocking to the ears of all right-minded persons, because it is offensive and blasphemous to the majesty of the Almighty.

To him, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God, we render and ascribe all might, majesty, adoration and praise, now and for ever.

SERMON II.

ON THE HOLY TRINITY.

MATT. xviii. 19.

Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

IN these words we hear the original institution of that rite, by which the followers of our blessed Saviour have in all times been initiated into the profession of the Christian faith; and it is especially to be observed, that the Apostles are herein commanded by our Lord's own mouth to administer baptism in the names of all the three Persons who exist in the unity of the Godhead. In opposition to this, however, the first article with which the Socinian, or Unitarian, Creed commences, is, that

“^a there is one God, in one Person only.’ Herein consists the whole peculiarity of their doctrine, as to this point. For that which is subsequently asserted, namely that he is the “sole Creator and Governor of the universe, absolute in all perfection and the sole object of religious worship,” is the same which we and all Christians hold. The question therefore as to this article turns on the assertion, that God exists “in one Person only;” contrary to the received opinion of the whole Christian Church, which agrees generally with our Article, wherein the Catholic doctrine is thus expressed: “There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible; and in the Unity of this Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

^a Belsham, p. 5.

^b XXXIX Articles. Art. I. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity, &c.

The question therefore is not of the Being, or Unity of God, but of the Trinity of Persons *in* that Unity; and therefore we must look to a negative article in the Unitarian's Creed, which explains more fully their assertion, that God exists "in one Person only." They "enter their solemn protest against the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity, as an ancient and gross corruption of the Christian revelation; the primary and fundamental article of which, is the Unity of God."

Their assertion is a negative; namely, that a Trinity of Persons does not exist in that Unity of Godhead; a Unity which we hold as much as they. Upon that point then we will proceed to examine the question.

These Unitarians reject the doctrine of the Trinity, together with those other most important doctrines which must stand or fall with it, "as inconsistent with reason, as unfounded in Scripture, as dishonour-

^c Belsham, p. 8.

^d Belsham, p. 14.

“ able to the divine attributes, as leading
“ to very pernicious practical consequences,
“ as gross corruptions of the Christian re-
“ velation, and as obstructing the progress
“ of the Gospel in the world.”

Their first objection, that the doctrine of the Trinity is inconsistent with reason, is the old plea of Deists and Infidels for centuries past. But to that it has long since been sufficiently answered, that it is not *contrary* to reason, though certainly *above* its reach; and therefore cannot be proved to be inconsistent with it: for it is absurd to make positive assertions, or to attempt to reason on matters which are utterly and avowedly incomprehensible. We have no *distinct* idea of God's entire nature. Our only *distinct* idea of him is a negative; that he *cannot* be limited, either in duration or power; *cannot* be resisted; *cannot* be comprehended. So far as this we have *distinct* ideas. But when we talk of his positive properties we have no distinct ideas; because infinity is the general attribute which pervades them all, and the

human mind can form no conception of that which is infinite. We know only what it is not ; that it is not limited in any manner : but it is most obvious that we cannot say what it is.

This may teach us how unreasonable it is to reject any thing that the Almighty has revealed concerning his own nature, because we do not comprehend it. One Person in the Deity, with all his necessary perfections, is, if we endeavour to explain all that belongs to them, fully as incomprehensible to mortal faculties, as the Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead.

Even if we descend to earthly things, to which our ideas and language are more adequate, to our own nature, and that of every thing animate or inanimate, if we consider every brute, every plant, even every blade of grass, it is beyond our power accurately to explain all the precise physical reasons of their birth or properties.

The doctrine of the Trinity is avowedly a mystery. It is therefore of necessity in-

comprehensible, otherwise it would cease to be a mystery. And it is, from the very nature of things, impossible that the peculiar nature of God should ever be revealed to us in this state of our existence, otherwise than as a mystery; because it does not admit of full explanation in mortal language. The images, in order to express which all language has been invented, are taken from visible objects. But the nature of God has nothing in common with them. Whether in regard to his Trinity of Persons, or to his other peculiar properties, such as his eternity for instance; the nature of God, if considered in any way, is equally invisible, equally incomprehensible, equally above human reason, though never contrary to it; and therefore, if this be sufficient ground for disbelief, it applies to the divine nature altogether.

We cannot explain by human language, framed according to sensible objects, that which is beyond the reach of our senses, and has nothing in common with those objects. It is therefore impossible, that our

language should express intelligibly the hidden things of God^e.

When he is pleased to reveal to us any thing concerning his own infinite nature, we are bound to receive, in humble thankfulness, what he so reveals, though we understand the matter thereof only just so far as he is pleased to open it; and are unable to penetrate at all into the mysteries which yet remain unrevealed. Our nature and faculties are imperfect, and limited; God's nature and deity are incomprehensible, and unlimited. It is therefore presumptuous and irrational to expect, that we should be able to advance one single step in so incomprehensible a matter as the divine nature, without the guidance of express revelation.

^e It is not in man's ability either to express perfectly, or conceive the manner how this was brought to pass. But the strength of our faith is tried by those things wherein our wits and capacities are not strong. Howbeit, because this divine mystery is more true than plain, divers having framed the same to their own conceits and fancies, are found in their exposition thereof more plain than true. *Hooker, Eccl. Pol. v. 51.*

That this has always been the case is abundantly shewn by comparison of the Jews, who enjoyed this advantage, with the heathens, who, though otherwise far more learned, enjoyed it not. The Jews, a people far from distinguished for learning or those arts which human ingenuity brings to perfection, were yet wise to a degree to which the sages of Greece could make no pretension, in all which related to the Godhead: for to them it had been revealed, so far at least as it pleased the Lord to reveal it. While the Greeks, far their superiors in letters and arts, during the very era of learning and philosophy, were yet labouring in vain to discover that, to which human faculties can never, by their own strength, attain.

The reason of this ignorance with them was the want of express revelation on the subject; for Plato himself, whose faculties could go as far as those of any mortal, Plato himself confesses^f, that nothing short

^f Τοῦτο δὴ οὖν τὸ μέρος φαμέν φύσει κυριωτάτον καὶ δυνατόν, ὡς οἶόν τε μαλίστα καὶ ἀρίστα μάθειν, εἰ διδάσκοι τις· ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἂν διδάξειεν εἰ μὴ Θεὸς ὑφηγοίτο. *Epinomis.*

of an actual communication from the Deity could resolve their doubts and clear up their difficulties.

Even the feeble ray of knowledge in sacred things which they *did* possess, seems to have been either borrowed from the Jews, perhaps through the medium of the Ægyptians; or else to have been a remnant of patriarchal tradition, which might have been handed down from the sons of Noah to their descendants. And it is well worth remarking, that all in which the heathens made any approaches towards truth in their traditions of *facts*, may be *clearly* traced to events recorded in the holy Scriptures. Those traditions related principally to

Αναγκαιον ουν εστι περιμενειν, έως αν τις μαθη ως δει προς τους Θεους και προς ανθρωπους διακεισθαι. ΑΛΚ. ποτε ουν παρεστα ο χρονος ούτος, ω Σωκράτες, και τις ο παιδεύσων; ήδιστα γαρ αν μοι δοκω ιδειν τουτον τον ανθρωπον τις εστιν. ΣΩΚ. Ούτος εστιν, ᾧ μελει περὶ σου. αλλα δοκει μοι, ὡς περ τῷ Διομηδεϊ φησι την Αθηναν Ὅμηρος απο των οφθαλμων αφελειν την αχλυν,

Οφρ' εὖ γιγνωσκοι ημεν Θεον ηδε και ανδρα, οὕτω και σου δειν απο της ψυχης πρωτον αφελοντα την αχλυν, ή νυν παρουσα τυγχανει, το τηνικαυτ' ηδη προσφερειν δι' ὧν μελλεις γνωσεσθαι ημεν κακον ηδε και εσθλον· νυν μεν γαρ ουκ αν μοι δοκης δυνηθηναι. Alcib. ιβ'. ιγ'.

events of a general nature ; such as the creation of mankind, and the universal deluge. Among particular nations, which had later intercourse with Judæa and its neighbourhood, other circumstances may be found, connected with persons and things mentioned in the Bible. In sacred matters, the being of God, and his omnipotence and eternity, though corrupted by the fiction of numerous subordinate deities, and defaced by many impious absurdities, was still a truth originally derived from the same source. And, what is much more to our present purpose, even the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons, that doctrine from which infidelity now revolts, passed down with the tradition of matters of fact ; corrupted indeed and debased ; but still it passed downward from the same source. It was found in very ancient times among the Greeks and Romans ; and at this day it exists, together with records of the same great events, though in a corrupt form, yet in one wherein the original mystery is still discernible. It exists even now in the wild mythology of the nations

of Hindostan : a people situated nearer to the sources of patriarchal tradition, and hardly to be suspected of having framed for themselves mysteries, by abstract speculation, and refinements in theology.

A Trinity of Persons in the Godhead is a doctrine which may be traced throughout the books of the Old Testament, which are confessedly, by many ages, the oldest records which now exist, or which can be proved ever to have existed. Those books were set forth among men who followed the same faith with the sons of Noah, who had been the progenitors of them and of all mankind. The matters of fact, and the mysterious doctrines contained therein, were both written by the same inspired person who was commissioned to deliver the Law expressly sent to them from God : by one whose means of information, and whose peculiar favour with the Lord, place him equally above the imputation of deceiving or being deceived.

Now if a similarity of doctrine, particularly in points beyond the reach of human reason, be found among the descendants

both of Jews and Heathens, it seems probable at least that such doctrine was that of Noah the common father of both, “a just man, a preacher of righteousness,” and one who “walked with God;” who had therefore abundant means of supernatural instruction, and who cannot be suspected of having perverted them. We will examine first the Old Testament, as disclosing from inspiration the same matters which appeared, as retained in the form of tradition more or less corrupted, among the Heathens.

Now the principal evidence to be brought forward in *this* place, is that of a *plurality* of Persons, not exactly of a Trinity, in the Godhead : though we might be allowed to account the appearances of angels to Abraham, and to Lot, by threes, as some representation of this precise mystery §. The names however of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, belong to the more clear revelation of the New Testament, and in the discussion of the divinity of the second and

§ As also the threefold benediction in Numbers vi. 24, 25, 26. and the doxology, Isaiah vi. 3. &c.

third Persons in the Trinity, in reply to the particular Unitarian articles upon those points, I propose to bring forward, from both parts of the Bible, the arguments which particularly affect that branch of the question. All which I shall now endeavour to shew, is, that the Deity was revealed by the Prophets, (though not always in express terms,) and was understood by the Jewish nation, as consisting of more than one Person.

It is a very striking circumstance, a circumstance which infidelity itself must allow to have great weight, that to a people whose propensity to idolatry was strong even up to the captivity; to that people, the God who declared himself so jealous of his Unity, revealed himself nevertheless by his Prophets under a plural name. It cannot be imputed to inadvertency that *they* used such a mode of expression; and when we consider the strong tendency of the Jews to Polytheism, and the heavy vengeance denounced, and often inflicted on them for it, we cannot suppose that language in which was conveyed, even that which might

possibly be considered to give an appearance of sanction to that vice, would be employed by *such* persons, if they could have avoided the use of it^h. We cannot account for it, except by admitting that a plural name was peculiarly adapted to their and our God, Jehovah.

That a plural name was commonly employed, is manifest in the original language of the Scriptures; and even in our own translation the plural form of speech frequently occurs, though one particular word, which ought to have been rendered *Gods*, in the plural, is commonly translated into the singular, *God*. For an instance, we need to look no farther than the third word in the book of Genesis, the very opening of the Law. : “ In the beginningⁱ *Gods* created the heavens and “ the earth;” and the same plural word is

^h Lord Bolingbroke, whose object is well known, actually argued thus: “ When God proceeds to the creation of man, he calls in other beings to co-operate with him, and make man in his *and their* image. This “ seems to lay a foundation for polytheism, &c.” *Lord Bolingbroke’s Works*, iii. 300.

ⁱ אלהים

repeatedly used in the same manner.^l This very argument is upon record, as having been strongly urged by a converted Jew^k to his brethren. “Why else,” says he, “is that frequent mention of God, by “ nouns of the plural number ; as in Gen. “ i. 1. where the word *Elohim*, which is “ rendered *God*, is of the plural number? “ Which demonstrates as evidently as may “ be, that there are several Persons partak- “ ing of the Divine nature and essence.”

In our own authorised version, though it is not guarded with that precision which would have been employed, had Unitarianism, and not Popery, been the prevailing error of the times in which it was made ; yet, in our own version, abundant instances may be shewn of the use of the plural number in speaking of God. “¹ God said, “ Let *us* make man in *our* image,” &c. “^m The Lord God said, Behold the man is “ become as one of us,” &c. Again, in the prophecy of Isaiah, “ⁿ I heard the voice

^k John Xeres. See Jones’s Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, iii. 1.

^l Gen. i. 26.

^m Gen. iii. 22.

ⁿ Isaiah vi. 8.

“ of the Lord saying, Whom shall *I* send,
“ and who will go for *us* ?” &c. It is to
no purpose to multiply such instances,
which might easily be done. Let any one
search for himself, and he will easily find
abundant satisfaction. This only *ought* to
be observed ; that the expression here put
in the mouth of God, cannot be under-
stood as if he were speaking to the angels,
as has been asserted by the Unitarians.
For where do we find that God takes
counsel of them, as to what he shall do, or
what he shall forbear. “ ° Who hath known
“ the mind of the Lord, or who hath been
“ his counsellor ?” The expression can be
understood and explained intelligibly only
by admitting, that one Person of the Tri-
nity here speaks to another. For as to the
style which kings on earth now use, where-
in the plural number is employed in
speaking only of one ; (and this also has
been suggested as accounting for the
plural name in the Scripture ;) as to that
style, it must be shewn that they used it in

° Isaiah xl. 13.

the days of Moses at the very least, in order to prove any thing thereby: that objection therefore falls to the ground.

In the fourth chapter of the Prophet Daniel there is another striking mention of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, where “a Watcher and a Holy One” is stated to come down in the Prophet’s vision, and to pass judgment on Nebuchadnezzar, which is declared to be done “by the decree of the Watchers, and the command of the word of the Holy Ones.” What Holy Ones can these be who pass decrees in heaven upon the kings of the earth? What but the King of kings in his Trinity of Persons? The same expression is continued through the next chapter also: “^p *They* took his glory from him,” &c.

I will mention only a few more out of the very many texts, which shew that the name and power of the Lord are applied indifferently to more than one Person in the Old Testament. “^q The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right

^p Dan. v. 20.

^q Psalm xc. 1.

“hand,” &c. Here the name of the Lord is attributed to two Persons. “^r I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state He will put thee down.” Here acts of sovereignty are ascribed on equal terms to two Persons in the Deity. “^s I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent Me unto thee.” Here God promises his presence and protection, while he declares *himself* to be sent by the Lord of hosts ^t. The doctrine of a Plurality of Persons is thus manifestly taught in the Old Testament, while it every where insists on the strictest Unity in the Godhead.

Before we proceed to that proof which, as might be expected, is yet more dis-

^r Isaiah xxii. 19.

^s Zechariah ii. 2.

^t There are in the Psalms many passages which shew the union of the singular and plural appellation in God, thus implying a Trinity (or at least a Plurality) in the Unity. For instance, Psalm viii. 12. “Lords,” in the plural, (is) “a just Judge,” in the singular. Condemnation is also denounced on those who, though forbidden to worship more Gods than one, should forget “Lords.” Psalm ix. 17. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, all the people who forget Lords.” So these passages would stand in a literal version.

tinctly given in the New Testament, it is not unworthy of our notice to observe that remnant of tradition which kept alive some imperfect idea of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, even among the Pagans; whether it were derived from the Jews, or from the Patriarchs, the sons of Noah. That tradition does not bear the stamp of human invention; and we may account for it perhaps not unreasonably, by supposing it to have been held in its original state, by him who was the stock of the various nations settled in distant parts of the earth, from whom they derived the doctrines of their faith, as well as their being. We find it indeed existing at this day among the barbarous nations of the peninsula of India, where the doctrine of three Persons in one God remains in their Bramah, Veshnù, and Sceva; though, as it did among the Greeks and Romans, it remains with them in a very corrupted state; and it is a remarkable coincidence, that the second Person in that Trinity, is, as in ours, a God incarnate, from whom acts of mercy proceed towards man.

This doctrine, if we had nothing to which we might trace its origin, would be unaccountable. But when we find that it coincides with the Christian Trinity, and with the plurality of Persons in the Godhead, which is plainly taught by the plural name of God, and by the threefold appearances in the Old Testament; matters which we learn from those which are infinitely the oldest of all authentic records; it is not unreasonable to suppose, that this religious mystery may have been preserved to those Indian heathen by tradition, even from the time when they separated themselves from the original seat of the common progenitors of mankind.

They would naturally hand down their own faith, as we find that it was handed down in other cases; for instance, in the book of Job probably a descendant from Esau; who plainly mentions the Redeemer, and calls him by the name of God. That faith soon lost its purity, except in the records of the one chosen nation; while among the others, fragments broken and corrupted alone remained;

yet, by God's providence, fragments so singular and remarkable, as when compared with the true and perfect doctrine, to give abundant evidence that they proceeded from the same source. Of the religion of the Eastern nations in general we yet know comparatively little, and better knowledge will probably throw clearer light on the traces by which their superstitions are connected with, and were derived from the true faith.

But how shall we account for the very strong and remarkable resemblance which exists, among all the darkness of heathen superstition, between that corrupt Trinity which was found in the Roman and Samothracian Cabala, and the true Trinity of Christians and of Holy Writ? How; except by concluding that those superstitions proceeded from the same source with the true faith, and that they were imperfectly delivered to the ancestors of those nations, by the sons of Noah; or else that they were borrowed by the Greeks from Egypt, and by the Egyptians from Israel. The Samothracian Cabiri were the origin of the

Capitoline Trinity at Rome. Now the very word *Cabiri*, or *Cabirim*, *powerful ones*, is Hebrew^u, and shews the origin of the doctrine, which was said to have been brought, within eight hundred years from the deluge, from Samothracia into Phrygia, and from thence to Rome. It is applied to the three preeminent deities who had sprang, by an easy corruption, out of the real and original doctrine of a Trinity in Unity. In the Capitoline Trinity of Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno, we may observe, that Minerva, the Divine wisdom, is the second person; no slight coincidence with the Wisdom of God, the Word.

The Platonic Trinity, as it was held and taught by his followers, till they deviated, as was the case in later times, from the doctrine, consisted of ^xthree original hypostases:—the first, ^yself-existence and goodness; the second, mind; the third, life

^u כַּבִּירִים καβειροι. θεοι δυνατοι. See Cudworth's Intel. Syst. 451.

^x Τρεις αρχικαι υποστασεις.

^y Το ἐν και τ' αγαθον, νους, και ψυχη.

or soul. Neither was this doctrine invented by Plato, as we are told by Plotinus, who asserts ^z that it had been in ancient time uttered before his days, though not distinctly; having been delivered by Parmenides. But Parmenides followed the Pythagorean system, and therefore the doctrine may be carried up to Pythagoras; and indeed it is by various ancient authors asserted to have been the doctrine of his School^a. Now Pythagoras, as they declare^b, was instructed in the Orphic mysteries relating to the gods, from whence all the Grecian theology was derived; from whence also Plato afterwards learned it;

^z See Cudworth's Intel. Syst. 546.

Ἀπασα γὰρ ἡ παρ' Ἑλλήνων σοφία τῆς Οὐρανίας ἐστὶ μυσαγωγίας ἐκγονος· πρῶτος μὲν Πυθαγόρου παρὰ Ἀγλαοφίμου τα περὶ Θεῶν ὀργία διδασχθέντος, δεύτερος δὲ Πλάτωνος ὑποδεξάμενος τὴν πάντεσσι περὶ τούτων ἐπιστήμην, ἐκ τῶν Πυθαγορείων καὶ Ὀρφικῶν γραμμάτων. *Theol. Platonis*, l. i. c. v.

^a A Trinity of Persons for the purpose of creation was taught by the Pythagoreans, and by Xenocrates. Αὐτοὶ τὸ ἀριθμὸν ζοιχείαν τὸ Ἐν, καὶ ἡ Δυάς ἡ ἀορίστος, ἣν ὑπέτιθεσαν τῷ Ἐνὶ πρὸς γενέσιν τῶ πληθὺς τῶν ἀριθμῶν. *Themistius*, lib. i. de *Anima*.

^b Procli Comment. in *Timæum* Platonis, l. ii. 94.

and a Trinity was a part of those Orphic mysteries. ^c It is known that all these three persons, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato, had travelled into Egypt, and had been initiated into the secrets of the Egyptian theology; and therefore it seems most probable, that a Trinity was one part of their Hermaïcal doctrine, as it was called ^d.

Thus then a Trinity in the Godhead may be traced on the one hand to the Egyptians, a people much conversant with Israel from very early times; and on the other hand, to the island of Samothracia, within eight hundred years from the de-

^c Φαῖης, ἑρμῆος, κρονος. See Cudworth's Intel. Syst. 547.

^d It is not to be disputed that the existence of the Platonic Triad or Trinity, as deities, has been, and may well be called in question. Nor is much weight rested upon it here. The present argument only brings it forward, if it may be admitted, collaterally, as some additional confirmation to that which is more decidedly proved by the other evidence here adduced, viz. that some idea of a Trinity in the Godhead did exist among the heathens. That it was taught by Plato himself is not here asserted, but that it was the doctrine of his School after, as it had been of other philosophers before him.

luge. Whether it came from Japheth, or from the Israelites, it is still the most ancient doctrine of theology in the world, after that of the simple existence of a God. It ought not to excite wonder that the doctrine of the Trinity was corrupted by Platonists and others, so that three gods were often substituted for three hypostases, or persons, in one God. It is far more wonderful that a doctrine so mysterious should have continued to exist at all: and it may not be too much for Christians to conclude, that if it had been of men, it must have come to nought; but since it was of God, nothing could overthrow it.

The proofs of this doctrine are, as might be expected, far more explicit and precise in the New, than in the Old Testament. The names of the three persons are mentioned, indifferently, as performing acts of sovereignty and divine power; and they are used without distinction as to order and precedence; a circumstance which plainly intimates the perfect equality which exists between them, and which is essential to their Unity in the Godhead.

The first and most important proof of this nature, is the use of all the three names in the sacrament of baptism, and that by our Saviour's own express command; for it is impossible, that in the very rite by which he appointed the initiation of converts into the Christian faith, any thing should be introduced by him which could be injurious to that faith. His words are these: “^e Go therefore and teach all nations;” or, as in the margin of our translation, “^f Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” How distinctly are all the three Persons here named, as equally essential to that rite which was to be the seal of Christians for ever! And yet Christianity came to supersede among the heathens their polytheism; and it always teaches, that there is but One God. If therefore, in the rite by which converts are to be initiated into that faith, it be necessary to specify three Persons in the Godhead, it follows, that a

^e Matt. xxviii. 19.^f Μαθητευσατε.

Trinity must be reconcileable with the Unity of God.

The Apostolic blessing is another powerful evidence to the same purpose. It shews both the distinction of the Persons, and their equality in the Godhead; for being in respect of Godhead One, it signifies not which Person is first named. Here the Son stands first, “*§* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.”

I shall, for the present, satisfy myself with these two passages, because they relate to most solemn occasions; on which it is not to be imagined without impiety, that our Lord and his Apostle could have used any other language, than that which it was proper for them to deliver, and for their converts to receive. If we can imagine any thing of error or inadvertency in the very initiatory rite ordained by Christ himself; by our Lord, or even as the Unitarians call him, by “*a prophet of the highest order;*” if we can conceive him

to have been capable of mistake, or inaccuracy, in instituting a form as the distinguishing badge of that faith which he came to reveal, there is an end to all respect for his Deity; and we are even guilty of rejecting and insulting his claim to divine inspiration altogether.

It would be easy to multiply proofs from the New Testament in confirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity. But as the general question will, of necessity, be discussed, in proving the Deity of the separate Persons, it seems unnecessary to insist farther on the point at present.

This doctrine then is traced up to the highest antiquity; and it cannot be proved to be, as the Unitarians say, “inconsistent with reason;” because, inasmuch as it is avowedly incomprehensible to our faculties, we are not capable of deciding on its consistency or inconsistency with a higher reason than ours. It stands upon the authority of testimony; of that word which declares it, such as it is, and in so much as it is revealed, to be a revelation from God. That it is not “unfounded in

“Scripture,” has already been shewn shortly, and shall be, by God’s help, more abundantly shewn, in treating of the several Persons who constitute the Trinity in the Divine Unity. That it is not “dishonourable to the divine attributes,” is sufficiently plain, because it takes nothing from the Almighty, the one only God^h, and attributes every thing excellent to him ; while it teaches, that *in* that Godhead, and not to the diminution or dishonour of it, there exist in a mysterious manner, Three Equal Persons. That it does not “lead to pernicious practical consequences,” is clear ; for the consequences, to which allusion is here made, must be those of which they accuse us, namely, the worship of more Gods than one, and of

^h These three names of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must denote a threefold difference or distinction belonging to God, but such as is consistent with the unity and simplicity of the divine nature : for each of these includes the whole idea of God, and something more. So far as they express the nature of God, they all adequately and exactly signify the same. It is the additional signification that makes all the distinction between them. *Bp. Gastrell on the Trinity.*

course, the neglect of that which is solely due to the one Almighty. But this was answered, in that which was replied to them upon the last preceding point. That it is not “a corruption of the Christian doctrine,” is proved by the very words of the New Testament which explicitly teach it. That it “obstructs the progress of the Gospel in the world,” is an assertion which remains to be proved by those who advance it. And even though it were proved, we should find no authority therein for setting aside a doctrine expressly taught in the word of God.

That the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, was that of the earliest times of Christianity, and was the creed of all the apostolic Fathersⁱ, is easily to be

i “Unus est omnia, dum ex uno omnia per substantiæ scilicet unitatem: et nihilominus custoditur *οικονομία* sacramentum tres dirigens, Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum.”—“Quoniam et ipsa regula fidei a pluribus Deis sæculi, ad unicum et verum Deum transfert, non intelligentes unicum quidem, sed cum sua *οικονομία* credendum; numerum et dispositionem Trinitatis divisionem præsumentes Unitatis. Quando Unitas ex semetipsa derivans Trinitatem, non destru-

proved. But with Unitarians that argument would perhaps have little weight ;

“atur ab illa sed administretur.” *Tertullian. adv. Præxam, sub initio.*

‘Ο Κλημης αρχαιοτερος, Ζη, φησιν, ὁ Θεος καὶ ὁ Κυριος Ἰη-
σους Χριστος, καὶ τὸ Πνευμα τοῦ Ἁγίου. *Basil. ii. p. 358.*
The threefold doxology used as we use it appears in the
Constitutiones Apostolicæ, a work of the second cen-
tury. *Bull. p. 49.* Τίς οὖν οὐκ ἀν ἀπορήσας λεγοντας Θεον
Πατερα, καὶ Υἱον Θεον, καὶ Πνευμα Ἅγιον, δεικνυντας αὐτων καὶ
τὴν ἐν τῇ ἐνώσει δυνάμιν, καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ τάξει διαιρέσιν ἀκουσας
ἀδελφους καλουμενους. *Athenagoras (A. D. 177.) ad calc.*
Just. Mart. Cyprian, about the middle of the second
century, says, “Si baptizari quis apud hæreticos potuit,
“ — templum Dei factus est, Quæro cujus Dei? Si
“ Creatoris? Non potuit qui in eum non credit. Si
“ Christi? Nec hujus fieri templum qui negat Deum
“ Christum. Si Spiritus Sancti? *Cum Tres Unum sint,*
“ quomodo Spiritus Sanctus ei placatus esse potest, qui
“ aut Patris, aut Filii inimicus est? *Bull. Jud. Eccl.*
Cath. 309.

Ἐρρωσθαὶ ἡμᾶς εὐχομεθα ἀδελφοὶ στοιχοῦντες τῷ κατὰ τὸ
εὐαγγέλιον λόγῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μεθ’ οὗ, δοξα τῷ Θεῷ καὶ
Πατρὶ, καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι, &c. *Smyrncorum Ep. de*
Martyrio Polycarpi. Bul. Def. Fid. Nic. lv. §. 13. The
doxology of the disciples of St. Ignatius is to the same
purport. That the Trinity in the Unity of the God-
head was taught by the primitive Christians is evident
also from the Philopatris, (ascribed to Lucian about
A. D. 170.) where a Christian is introduced as teaching
whom men are to worship, in these words: Ὑψιμεδοντα
Θεον, μεγαν, ἀμβροτον, ουρανωνα, υιον Πατρος, Πνευμα ἐκ
Πατρος ἐκπορευομενον, ἐν ἐκ τριων, καὶ ἐξ ἑνος τρια ταυτα νο-

for greatly as they value human discernment in themselves, they are not much disposed to admit, that those whose evidence makes against them deserve attention. Though so short was the interval between the days of the Apostles and those Fathers, that it is impossible but the latter must have well known, what that was which the former taught. But we need not to rely on human opinion. God's own word is sufficient support for the true Christian faith. Only let us remember, that it is not necessary for us to comprehend all that, which is proposed to our belief. Whatsoever the divine word declares, it is our bounden duty to receive it. Were all that relates to the Godhead designed for our full comprehension, there would be no meaning in that expression which we find in Scripture, of "the secret things of God." It is impossible that we should

μιζε Ζηνα, τονδε ηχου Θεον. This was designed to be a ridicule of the received faith of Christians in that early time. "The supreme, immortal, great, celestial God; "the Son of the Father, the Spirit proceeding from the Father; one of three, and three of one," &c.

penetrate the *whole* depth of such mysteries, as he has thought fit to unfold only in part. The peculiar doctrines of Christianity are revealed, some partially, some entirely. The former are a perpetual exercise of our faith : the latter of our obedience. “ The secret things belong to
“ the Lord our God ; but those things
“ which are revealed belong to us, and to
“ our children for ever, that we may do all
“ the words of this law^k.”

^k Deut. xxix. -29.

SERMON III.

ON THE GODHEAD OF CHRIST.

COLOS. ii. 9.

*In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead
bodily.*

THE text now recited, is one which bears full upon that article of the Unitarians which comes next under consideration; an article in direct opposition to this, and to very many similar passages. This Scripture teaches the actual Godhead of the Son, and his coequality with the Father; and these, together with the doctrine of the atonement made by him, are denied by the followers of Unitarianism in the following terms ^a. They believe that our blessed Lord “ Jesus Christ was a proper

^a Belsham, v. 2.

“ human being, *in all respects* like unto “ his brethren;” though they acknowledge him to have been the greatest of prophets, and the promised Messiah; who was “ sent “ to supersede the Mosaic institute, and to “ introduce a new and more liberal dispensation; and to reveal the doctrine of “ eternal life by a resurrection from the “ dead.” They believe his miracles, prophecies, resurrection, and ascension.

With this sort of profession of positive belief, such as it is, which derogates so essentially from the dignity of our Almighty Saviour, they deny that most important doctrine of the atonement made by him^b; and they disclaim that, which they plainly, though falsely, insinuate that Christians hold, “^c a subordinate Creator and Governor of the universe.”

I ought perhaps to apologize for the utterance of such doctrines as these within these walls, consecrated to the God of our Fathers, the one God in three Persons; were it not necessary to state

^b Belsham, x. 4.

^c Ib. ix. 2.

them, in order to their refutation; and I should have been unwilling to lay them before such of my congregation, as may be altogether unpractised in the question, were it not, that it seems better for them to hear these things now stated, together with a scriptural reply to them, than that they should be left to the hazard of stumbling upon them, unprepared, and unguarded.

The first assertion to be here disproved is, that our Saviour was a mere human being! Horrible it is to hear such a thing asserted, in a country which enjoys the full light of that revealed word, whereby his Godhead is so distinctly proved. Yet we have heard that this is asserted in the words which I just now cited; words which lose none of their impiety by the subsequent admission of Christ's divine mission, and of his authority as the chief of the prophets; for surely none is ignorant that the difference between God and his creatures is so infinite, that no exaltation of the latter can possibly raise them to any thing approaching to the former.

We hold with all Christians—for that is a strange Christianity which denies it—we hold, that our Lord Jesus Christ “^d is the “very and eternal God, of one substance “with the Father;” and we thus proceed to establish that assertion by the inspired word of God.

For in this matter there is no conviction to be obtained from mere argument. Reasoning can do nothing in this case, farther than to prove the authenticity of the scriptural assertions, which plainly and distinctly mark our blessed Redeemer as the only-begotten Son, coeternal, and coequal, and one in identity of essence and deity with the Father. It must never be lost from our sight, that the mystery of three Persons in one God can never be explained, because it can never be understood by man. There is therefore no other proof on this part of our controversy, and there can be no other, than the recorded word of him whose word is truth. With that we must rest satisfied. Upon that we may

^d XXXIX Articles, Art. 2.

rely in entire confidence and security. Abandoning therefore in great measure the weapons of human warfare, the powers of abstract reasoning, and argument, our weapon must almost solely be “ the sword “ of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

It is, I believe, admitted by every one, that the title of Lord of hosts, as it stands in our Bibles, belongs *exclusively* to the one Almighty God, to him who has expressly declared, that his glory he will not give to another. If therefore we find that the Person mentioned by that appellation is the Person of Jesus Christ, it will follow of necessity that he is the Almighty God. And moreover, since there is but one Lord of hosts, and that incommunicable name is applied both to the Father and to the Son, it must also follow, that the Father and the Son, two Persons, are one and the same God.

Now St. John affirms concerning Christ, “ *These things said Esaias, when he saw “ his glory, and spake of him.” But what

* John xii. 47.

is it which Esaias there says? “^e Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” A little farther onward, the same Lord of hosts utters those very words, ^f which St. John had been quoting when he made that reference to Esaias. The Apostle therefore plainly declares, that the words spoken by the Lord of hosts were spoken by Christ; and therefore Christ must be the Lord of hosts; and as such, one with the Father; to whom, as God, that name exclusively belongs.

The Saviour is also a name which God takes exclusively to himself: “^g I, even I, am the Lord; and besides me there is no Saviour.” “^h Thou shalt know no God but me: for there is no Saviour besides me.” Notwithstanding this, St. Peter applies the title to Christ: “ⁱ Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” So do the angels at his nativity: “^k To you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” St. Paul re-

^e Isa. vi. 5.

^g Esaias xliii. 11.

ⁱ 2 Pet. iii. 4.

^f Esaias vi. 9, 10.

^h Hosea xiii. 4.

^k Luke ii. 11.

peatedly does the same; for instance, in his Epistle to Titus: “¹Through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of our God and Saviour.” But we know *that* commission to have been given to St. Paul by Christ himself. To these might be added a multitude of instances, wherein the term Saviour, which also is peculiarly appropriated to God, has been applied in his word to Christ, in such a manner that the application cannot be evaded.

In the 78th Psalm^m it is said, “They tempted and provoked the most high God.” St. Paul, alluding to this, says, “ⁿNeither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted.” Christ therefore is the same with the most high God; the same in power and Godhead; and there is but one God, as this same Apostle shews^o, though the Person of Christ is distinctly marked, as separate from that of the Father. The Apostle says to the Hebrews

¹ Titus i. 3.

^m Psal. lxxviii. 56.

ⁿ 1 Cor. x. 9.

^o 1 Cor. viii. 4.

also, in the opening of the Epistle, that by Christ God made the worlds^o: that worship, which is God's due solely, is due to Christ^p: that God gives the name of God, and ascribes everlasting supremacy and dominion to Christ^q: that he was from the beginning, and shall be to the end, the eternal Creator, and Almighty Lord^r. The Prophet Malachi most plainly shews, that the temple, which, as every one knows, signified among the Jews the temple of God alone, was the temple of Christ who was to come^s. Therefore Christ, who is the Lord there mentioned, was also the Lord of that temple; the same God who was therein worshipped^t. Our Saviour himself asserts “^uI and my Father are “one.” And it ought to be remarked that his expression is very particular; specifying two Persons, and uniting them in one Godhead, or one nature; for the distinction lies in the Personality; the

^o Heb. i. 2.

^p Heb. i. 6.

^q Heb. i. 8.

^r Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.

^s Mal. iii. 1.

^t See Bp. Horsley. Sermon xxx.

^u John x. 30. *Εγώ και ὁ Πατήρ ἐν ἐσμεν.*

Unity, in the Godhead; to which belongs the power which he is in that place vindicating to himself. Our Saviour also asserts, “^x I am in the Father, and the Father in me;” and St. Paul says the same, “^y God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” The union of Godhead with the distinction of Person are here most plainly marked.

St. Paul, and with him all the Apostles, and all Christians after him, hold, “^z to us there is but one God, the Father.” St. Thomas, before the face of the Apostles, and on a most remarkable occasion, calls Christ “^a My Lord, and my God;” which title he accepts, and no one present expresses the slightest surprise or disapprobation at it. What does this prove, but that Christ and the Father were held by the Apostles for one and the same God?

The divine worship also which Christ admitted from his disciples and others decidedly proves the same: for it was ad-

^x John xiv. 11.

^y 2 Cor. v. 19.

^z 1 Cor. viii. 6.

^a John xx. 28.

mitted by him, who himself declared,
 “^b Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,
 “ and him only shalt thou serve.”

In that prophecy of Isaiah, “ which no one ever dreamed of applying to any other than Christ, the child to be born is styled, “ The mighty God” and “ The everlasting Father,” as well as “ The Prince of Peace.” He is often enough distinguished in respect of Personality, as the Son; and therefore, it is only in Godhead that he is the same with the Father. St. John tells us of Jesus Christ, “^d This is the “ true God, and eternal life:” and St. Paul again, in the words of my present text, declares, that “ in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Our Saviour himself plainly asserted his Godhead very early in his ministry at Capernaum, (Matt. ix. 6. Mark ii. 10.) when, the Scribes having accused him of blasphemy for saying, “ Thy sins be forgiven thee,” he replied, that “ the Son of man *hath*

^b Matt. iii. 10.

^c Isa. ix. 6.

^d 1 John v. 20. ΟΥΤΟΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ Ο ΑΛΗΘΙΝΟΣ ΘΕΟΣ, &c.

“ power on earth to forgive sins : ” not drawing back from the act, but rejecting the charge of blasphemy ; though it was an acknowledged thing, that none could forgive sins but God alone : which pointed to the manifest inference that He, the Son of man, *was* God. . Our Saviour held three conferences with the Jews, in each of which he asserted, and they understood him to assert, his entire equality with the Father, as to actual Deity.. The first is recorded in John v. 17, 18. “ Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to slay him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but called God his Father^e, making himself equal with God.” The second is in John viii. 58. “ Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him.” This was the punishment for blasphemy, as appointed by the Law. The third is in John x. 23 — 30. where he concludes his discourse with the words

^e Πατέρα ιδιον, his own Father.

lately cited: "I and my Father are one." Upon which the Jews again proceed to stone him, for the blasphemy which they conceived that he had uttered. Christ also declared himself the Son of man, to be Lord of the sabbath, which is God's sabbath day. (Matt. xii. 8.) Christ associated himself with the Father in terms of equality, John xiv. 23. "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And again, as it were, to prove the perfect identity of the Father and the Son, "All things that the Father hath, are mine." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also^f."

^f See also John iii. 34, 35, 36. and v. 17, 18, 23. Heathens and Jews, in the early days of Christianity, both understood the Christian religion as teaching that Christ is God. The famous letter of Pliny to Trajan, so often cited, states that the primitive Christians sang hymns to Christ *as God*. Julian, as cited by Cyril, shews that he understood St. John to teach Christ's proper Godhead. (See Whitaker's *Origin of Arianism*, p. 48, 49, 50 in note.) The Jews now understand the writings of the New Testament as teaching that Christ is very God, and they acknowledged of old that divine omnipotence and perfection were necessarily inherent in their

So correct is the declaration of that Creed, against which so indiscriminate an

Messiah, when they expressed so high indignation against our Saviour for taking to himself his name and office. The primitive Christians held that Christ is God, as appears in Justin Martyr, (A. D. 155.) in his Dialogue with Trypho. T. "As to your saying that "this Christ preexisted before all time, as God, and "then was born a man, and yet was not a man though "born of a man, it seems to me not only contradictory, "but absurd." J. "I know that this saying appears "contradictory to those of your nation, but I am able "to prove that the Son of the Creator preexisted as "God, and afterward was born of a virgin, as *man*." That the very first Christians prayed to Christ as God, is proved by Stephen's prayer to him expressly, at the moment of his death; a prayer for the remission of their sins, which God alone could remit, as was known and acknowledged by all.

Irenæus expressly asserts, that both the Father and the Son is God; and that none else is ever absolutely so called in the Scriptures. Lib. iii. cap. 6. That Christ is also God who spoke to Moses at the bush. Lib. iv. cap. 11. That God is wholly commensurate with Christ, and Christ with God. Lib. iv. cap. 8. See Bulli Def. Fid. Njç. cap. 5.

Clemens Alexandrinus also shews the Deity of Christ, and his identity with the Father. See Bull. ut sup. cap. 6.

That it was the belief of the Jews in the earliest times, that Christians *worshipped* Christ, is evident from their application at the martyrdom of Polycarp, that his

outcry is raised, that the right faith neither confounds the person, nor divides the substance.

There are doubtless passages in the New Testament, which impute inferiority beneath the Father to the man Jesus: that is, inferiority beneath the Godhead, to the human nature: for Christ took it upon him completely and sincerely, with all its wants and its weaknesses. This was an essential part of his humiliation, that he should put on, and unite himself with, a real, proper, human soul and body. The distinction, whereby all those passages which ascribe inferiority to Jesus are applied to his human nature, is no invention of ours, nor of any other Church. Our Lord's declaration, “^ε I came down from “ heaven, not to do my own will, but the “ will of him that sent me;” and that,

body should not be given to the Christians, “ lest, leaving him who had been crucified,” (whom therefore they were then in the habit of worshipping,) “ they “ should begin to worship this man;” Μη αφεντες τον εσταυρωμενον, τουτον αξιωνται σεβασθαι, &c. *Russell's Patres Apostol.* p. 360. §. xvii.

^ε John vi. 38.

“^h My Father is greater than I;” the word of the Apostle, that “ⁱ the head of “ Christ is God;” and his own remarkable declaration of his ^k ignorance, as the Son of man, when the final judgment should come; are all easily reconciled with the foregoing passages, by understanding them as spoken of his human nature; which retained all its natural deficiencies, while the Godhead, as has been, and shall be yet more fully, shewn, resided in his divine Person in actual identity with the Deity of the Father. This distinction between the divine and human natures in Christ is plainly marked by St. Paul; “^l He (God) “ hath appointed a day wherein he shall “ judge the world in righteousness, by “^m (in) the man whom he hath ordained.” If this appellation, “ the man,” be thought any argument in favour of the unbeliever’s assertion, that Christ is “ a mere man;” how can they make that to agree with the expression of the Prophet Zechariah, who

^h John xiv. 28.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xi. 3.

^k Mark xiii. 3.

^l Acts xvii. 31.

^m *Εν ανδρι*, &c.

calls that man the Almighty's fellow?
 " ⁿ Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd,
 " and against the *man* that is *my fellow*,
 " saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shep-
 " herd, and the sheep shall be scattered."
 What *fellow* can the Lord of hosts have,
 except a second Person in the same in-
 communicable and incomprehensible God-
 head? " ^o The supreme God," says a sound
 and excellent Divine, " who was mani-
 " fest in the flesh, and was in Christ re-
 " conciling the world to himself, shall re-
 " main in the same personal union with
 " him, till he has judged the world, and is
 " ready to deliver up the kingdom. God
 " will be present in the same Person with
 " our Judge, and therefore, the act of
 " judgment is ascribed indifferently to
 " both; either that God will judge the
 " world, or that we shall appear before the
 " judgment seat of Christ." The human
 infirmities and human passions which our
 Saviour shewed, when he hungered and

ⁿ Zechariah xiii. 7.

^o Jones, Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity: art. Divi-
 nity of Christ.

wept, are only proofs of the reality of his mortal nature; and are by no means inconsistent with such a union, as preserved the distinction between his two natures; but rather they are necessary consequences of it.

But there is yet a farther argument for the actual supreme Godhead of our Saviour, to be drawn from the Old Testament; though from want of due caution it has lost its proper force in our translation. And when we recollect the plain distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which the New Testament exhibits, this argument will go far to prove the identity of Godhead, without any confusion of Persons, in the Holy Trinity.

It is a most remarkable fact, that in many prophecies of the Old Testament, which plainly relate to the Son, our Saviour, he is called in the original language by the peculiar and incommunicable name *Jehovah*; though our translators seem often to have given way to the Jewish custom, of avoiding the mention of that sacred name, and have rendered it *the Lord*.

The Prophet Jeremiah speaks of the future kingdom of our Saviour upon earth, in these words: “^p I will raise unto David a “ righteous Branch, and a King shall reign “ and prosper. In his days Judah shall “ be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.” These expressions refer, without any shadow of doubt, to the future kingdom of the Messiah. Who that Messiah was to be, we learn from the original words, though not from the received translation, of the next following verse. “ And this is his “ name whereby he shall be called, Jeho- “ vah (not the Lord) our Righteousness.” The words of the Prophet Isaiah^q, which St. John quotes as uttered concerning Christ^r, and which have been already noticed, as proving that he is the Lord of hosts, prove moreover that the name *Jehovah* is his own name, and thereby strengthen their former evidence. The Prophet says, when, as the Apostle informs us, he saw Christ’s glory, and spake of him, not, “ I

^p Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

^q Isa. vi. 5.

^r John xii. 41.

“saw the Lord,” as we commonly read, but, “I saw Jehovah:” and the hymn of the angels to him is, “Holy, holy, holy,” not Lord God, but “Jehovah of hosts.” We might also insist on that triple expression of adoration; but since it is not a direct proof, though no bad presumptive evidence of the Trinity, when united with the others, I shall content myself with this mention of it. Isaiah also ^s remarkably applies that highest of all names to Christ, in prophesying of his forerunner; “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way,” not of the Lord, but “of Jehovah.” St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans^t, when arguing for the necessity of calling upon Christ, cites the words of the Prophet Joel; as having solemnly declared the same thing. Let us see how those words stand in the language of the original prophecy. “^u And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of *Jehovah* shall

^s Isa. xl. 3.

^t Rom. x. 12. See Bp. Horsley’s 30th Sermon.

^u Joel ii. 32. English Bible. iii. 5. Hebrew Bible.

“ be delivered : for in mount Zion and in
“ Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as *Jehovah*
“ *vah* hath said, and in the remnant whom
“ *Jehovah* shall call.” Joel therefore, according to St. Paul’s view of his prophecy, means our Saviour Christ Jesus, when he there speaks of *Jehovah*; and that name by which he does not scruple to call him, belongs to the one and true and Almighty God. The Unitarians profess to admit that Christ is the Messiah. How they can fairly avoid the conclusion that he is *Jehovah* also, it is difficult, if not impossible to shew.

St. John the beloved disciple, who has left us the fullest and best account of all which belongs to our Saviour’s divine nature, and of the doctrinal part of our religion, does not leave us without his evidence on this point of the Godhead of Christ. He lived longer than the other Apostles, and saw the heresy of Cerinthus, and others, who taught doctrines not much unlike to those of the Socinians and modern Unitarians on this point. Such an Apostle, living at such a period, opens his

Gospel with a direct assertion of the eternal preexistence of Christ, in unity of power, and identity of essence and of Godhead, with the Father. To the Word, which expression unquestionably denotes Christ, he there distinctly attributes the act of creation ; which the book of Genesis as distinctly attributes to God ; but by a *plural* name, a circumstance of which St. John and every Jew must have been well aware. In the second chapter also, that book of Genesis continuing the account of the creation, which the Apostle ascribes to Christ, says, “ These are the generations of the heavens “ and the earth when they were created ; “ in the day that,” not the Lord God, as in our version, but, “ Jehovah Gods made “ the earth and the heavens,” &c. That incommunicable singular name is here, and in many other places, coupled with the word *Gods* in the plural number ; which teaches plainly enough, that the peculiar name of the supreme God belongs to all the Persons included in the Trinity, though the Godhead be Unity itself.

There seems indeed to be no other fair and rational way of accounting for so unusual a form of speech; and it does not appear to be possible to shew any other, without imputing error to the words of him who is absolute perfection in every thing.

St. John declares in his Gospel, that “^{*} The Word was in the beginning.” It could hardly have been thought, that any one would seriously maintain, as has been done on the Socinian side of the question, that this signifies the beginning only of the creation, when the Apostle goes on to say, that “the Word was with God, and the “Word *was* God” in the beginning; and afterwards, that “all things were made “by him.” St. John’s assertion, therefore, of the eternity of the Word, and of the creation of all things by him, with that of St. Paul, “[†] By whom also he made the worlds;” and others, to the same effect, afford the only explanation of the use of a plural word, as a name of the Almighty Creator. The fruitless attempts of the

^{*} John i. 1.

[†] Heb. i. 2.

Unitarians to alter the version of this last passage, prove indeed that they feel its true and proper sense to be directed immediately against their doctrine. That great work of creation was performed by Jehovah, in his Trinity of Persons, and especially, as we have seen, by the second Person; to whom, therefore, the name of Jehovah must of necessity belong.

I need not here enter upon the identity of the Holy Ghost in Godhead with the Father and the Son, because that is made a separate article by the Unitarian, and will be separately discussed in these discourses.

St. John clearly asserts, that “the Word” performed that, which in the book of Genesis is ascribed to Jehovah; and he afterwards shews, that by the Word he means our Blessed Saviour; when he says, “^z The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Similar to this is also the language of St. Paul; “^a Without controversy great is the mystery of God-

^z Εσκηνωσεν, pitched his tent; i. e. he took that flesh as a covering. John i. 14.

^a 1 Tim. iii. 16.

“liness, God was manifest in the flesh:” expressions which, used as they are by those Apostles, can apply only to our Saviour in his incarnate state.

And here it seems proper to notice the insinuation, that we teach a “subordinate Creator and Governor of the universe.” For it is plainly insinuated by the Unitarian, ^b when he in a pointed manner disclaims that doctrine, while shewing the particulars of dissent in their party from our faith.

The Church of England holds, that the Son is the second Person in the Godhead, which Godhead is throughout infinite in all perfections; and so therefore are all the three Persons alike. Of infinity we cannot, from the very constitution of our nature, frame any distinct conception; but it is essential to all the peculiar properties of God. He is infinite in goodness, in power, in wisdom, in all his attributes. Therefore no humble Christian, no reasonable man, will expect that limited and im-

^b Belsham, ix. 2.

perfect natures, like ours, should be capable of comprehending those unbounded properties. Omnipotence is infinity of power. We hold, and we must hold, that it is fully possessed by the whole Godhead, and by every Person therein alike; because all the three Persons are but one in Godhead; and Omnipotence is its attribute.

Far be it from me however to attempt an explanation of this sublime mystery of the Holy Trinity, “farther than the very text doth, as it were, lead me by the hand.” The attempt to illustrate by similitudes has often been made, but it must be made with extreme caution. Our images must all be drawn from things with which we are acquainted; things of the visible creation, and therefore imperfect: and there is manifest danger of our applying in some degree that imperfection, which can hardly be separated from such things in our minds, to that Being who partakes not of it at all. His nature, as being absolutely perfect, must in our pre-

^c Martyr's Letters, p. 64.

sent stage of existence be absolutely incomprehensible; and equally so in regard to his infinity, whether we consider him in Unity or in Trinity. Of infinity we can have no more than a negative idea, namely, that it has no bounds; but its positive properties, whatever they be, are beyond our utmost conception.

The attempt to simplify an avowed mystery, however soothing to human presumption, is a mischievous attempt. It may lead us to some doctrine intelligible to our comprehensions; but it is almost, if not altogether certain, that it will lead us astray from the truth^d. That Christ our Lord was, and is, and always shall be the most high God, together and equally with the Father, is the faith of Christians; and this, without any attempt to bring it down to the level of our understandings, has, I trust,

^d Admirably has this been urged by a great and excellent writer of our Church, whose humility all may well emulate, though few can vie with the profundity of his learning, or the acuteness of his understanding: Hooker, Eccles. Pol. v. 51, 2, 3, 4. &c. See note ^c, page 36.

been abundantly proved by the word of Scripture itself. We might and we do add the testimony of that voice from heaven which called our Lord, God's *beloved* Son, at his ^e baptism and transfiguration, to shew that he is not called *The* Son merely as *holy men* have been called sons of God. We might and do challenge our adversaries to produce an instance of the application of that title, or of the "only begotten Son^f," to any mere mortal. We might and do argue from the first of these passages, that he who had yet done nothing remarkable, was called "the beloved Son," in regard to his antecedent relation to the Father; to which he himself, just before he suffered, referred. "^g Now, "O Father, glorify thou me with the glory "which I had with thee *before the world* "was." Lastly, we appeal to our Lord's own direct and unequivocal words; "^h Before Abraham was, I am;" an expression which is not to be smothered by talk-

^e Luke iii. 22.

^f John iv. 9. See Noelli Catechismus in Enchirid. Theol. p. 97.

^g John xvii. 5.

^h John viii. 58.

ing of preexistence in the Divine purpose ; an expression which not only claims existence before Abraham, but the property of self-existence, of never ceasing to be, of being He to whom all time is presentⁱ. And so the Jews understood it; for they took up stones to put him to death for blasphemy, “because,” said they, “thou, “being a man, makest thyself God^k.” Did he then retract, or explain away his expression? No. He justified it, and shewed that he was entitled to the name of *The Son of God* in a peculiar manner; far beyond those who are called children of God on account of their holiness, or of the gift of inspiration which was upon them. And that Person, who made that claim to Godhead, was he who received miraculous testimony by a voice from heaven, that God was well pleased with him. Could God be well pleased with an impostor and

ⁱ An expression by which he claims the right of bearing that peculiar name by which God designated himself to Moses; “Say unto the children of Israel, *I am* “hath sent me unto you.” Exod. iii. 14.

^k John x. 33.

blasphemer? The question requires no answer.

When the high priest adjured our Lord by the living God, which was the regular form of a judicial oath, to tell "whether " he were the Christ, *the* Son of God," he asserted that he was: for besides that St. Mark declares explicitly, "Jesus said, I " am;" the corresponding expression, "Thou hast said," was evidently a decided assent. And the Jews acted upon it *as such*, and punished him for blasphemy: not for making himself the greatest of prophets, but for making himself God.

The Godhead of our Saviour being thus established from the incontrovertible word of Holy Scripture; for I have declined making use of the opinions held by the Fathers of the Christian Church, in its earliest and most incorrupt times; because, strongly as they bear testimony to it, and greatly as their testimony deserves to be esteemed, our opponents protest against any authority of man: the Godhead of the Son being established from the word of God himself, it remains that we notice

the Unitarian's denial of the Atonement made by Christ¹. For if they could set aside his Godhead, there would be an end at once to the doctrine of a sacrifice made by him to atone for the sins of all mankind. “^mNo *man* can by any means “redeem his brother, nor give to God a “ransom for him.” Therefore they seek to degrade our Lord to a mere man, “in “all respects like unto his fellows.” But the falsehood of that blasphemy has been shewn; and we will now proceed, lest the argument should seem to be defective on a point of so great importance, shortly to prove the most comfortable and important doctrine of the Atonement from the words of Scripture.

But, first, it may not be improper to no-

¹ This is truly to us the very life of the question. And it would have afforded large ground indeed for discourse at present, did I not feel myself deterred by the complete and masterly discussion which it has already received from far abler hands. I shall therefore only notice it shortly in this place, observing that it depends on the decision of the Unitarian's question as to the actual Godhead of Christ.

^m Psalm xlix. 7.

tice the prevalence of idea of an atonement for offences throughout the world. Vicarious sacrifice has been, from the beginning, the practice of all people alike. Now reason could not have taught, that the death of a brute should have any efficacy to make atonement for the sins of man; for there is no reason whatever in the thing itself, why it should work that effect. Neither can it be imagined, as the Apostle argues, “ⁿ that the blood of bulls and of “ goats should take away sin.” The practice must have been of positive institution; and we read of it as such so early as the sacrifice of Abel. Nor is there any way to account for that institution, except as a type of him who was to be the one great sacrifice, whose death was to make atonement for the sins of the whole world. Our Lord himself says, “^o The Son of man “ came to give his life *a ransom* for many.” Thus, in the institution of the holy sacrament of his body and blood, he says, “^p This is my blood of the new testament,

ⁿ Heb. x. 4. ^o Matth. xx. 28. ^p Ibid. xxvi. 28.

“ which is shed for many *for the remission*
“ *of sins;*” and this is his own declaration,
and made with all possible solemnity. In
the Acts of the Apostles, we find St. Paul^q
declaring, that it was the blood of Christ
which had purchased us: “ Take heed
“ unto yourselves, and to all the flock over
“ which the Holy Ghost hath made you
“ overseers, to feed the Church of God,
“ which he hath *purchased with his own*
“ *blood.*” To the Romans he declares,
that “^r God spared not his own Son, but
“ delivered him up *for us all.*” To the
Galatians, “^s Christ hath *redeemed* us from
“ the curse of the Law, being *made a*
“ *curse for us.*” Redemption to mankind
is declared to be the consequence, not of
any purer doctrine which he taught, but
of his being made a curse for us in his cru-
cifixion; that is to say, our salvation is the
consequence of his sacrifice of Atonement.
To Timothy St. Paul declares, ^t that Jesus
Christ “ gave *himself a ransom* for all;”

^q Acts xx. 28.^r Rom. viii, 32.^s Gal. iii. 13.^t Tim. ii. 5.

and to the Hebrews, that they “^u are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.” St. John, in his first Epistle, tells us, that “^x the blood of Jesus Christ his (God’s) Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

“^y Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” This was typically shewn in the Old Law; and abundant proof has been given from the New, and it might, if necessary, be multiplied tenfold, to shew that the sacrifice of Atonement made by our blessed Saviour is that, to which all the typical sacrifices and atonements of the Mosaic Law refer. The matter, though concisely treated, has been even here abundantly established ^z.

It has, I trust, been clearly, though

^u Heb. x. 10. ^x John i. 7. ^y Heb. ix. 22.

^z The whole argument belonging to this question may be seen, as it is most fully and powerfully discussed by Dean Magee, in his excellent work “On Atonement and Sacrifice.” He fully demonstrates the fallacy of the whole Unitarian system, and especially of the artifices by which they seek to do away the Christian doctrine. There is not space for me to enter farther into the question at present, nor do I think it needful so to do.

shortly proved, that our Blessed Saviour is *not* “a proper human being in all respects “like unto his fellows;” but Very God, of one substance with the Father. It has been proved, that he did *not* come down, and much less was he created, “to supersede the Mosaic institute, and introduce “a new and more liberal dispensation;” and that he did *not* come merely to “reveal the doctrine of eternal life by a resurrection from the dead.” These were consequences, not causes of his coming; and they arose out of the grand object, his sacrifice of Atonement and Propitiation.

We cannot, and God forbid that we ever should, give up, for the idle fancies of mortal vanity, the express declarations of the inspired word of God. We cannot so make shipwreck of our faith, and only hope. Rather let us ever hold fast that corner stone of our faith. Rather let us join with the saints above in glorifying thee our Omnipotent Redeemer; “^a for thou “wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God

^a Rev. v. 9, 12, 13.

“ *through thy blood.*” And let us say in the words of their hymn, “ Worthy is the
“ Lamb that was slain, to receive power,
“ and riches, and wisdom, and strength,
“ and honour, and glory, and blessing.—
“ Blessing, and honour, and glory, and
“ power, be unto him that sitteth upon the
“ throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and
“ ever.”

SERMON IV.

ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

JOHN xvi. 13.

When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.

THE words which I have just now recited seem to imply, in their natural and obvious sense, that which comes next to be proved in maintaining the Catholic faith, and therein that of our own Church, against the tenets of Unitarians. They, the Unitarians, utterly deny the existence of the Holy Ghost, as a Person in the Holy Trinity. Still do they endeavour, upon this point also, through an artifice similar to that which was noticed in the preceding discourse, to raise against our Church the prejudices of those, who hold *together with*

us the Unity of the Deity, by a misstatement of the question. They assert, as if it were in opposition to the Church of England, that “^a Unitarians do not believe in the Personal existence of the Holy Spirit, *as a Being distinct from the Supreme.*” But neither do we, nor yet does any other Christian Church maintain such a belief. The fair statement of the point under discussion would have been, to have left out the latter part of the sentence, and to have declared merely their disbelief of the Personality of the Holy Spirit; for that is the whole of our doctrine in this matter to which their denial applies.

In discussing questions of such infinite importance, it is much to be desired that the spirit of party should be carefully restrained; that it should not induce us to hazard assertions, or at least insinuations, so plain that they cannot be misunderstood, though they be utterly groundless; in the hope of bringing discredit on the

^a Belsham, x. 3.

cause of the opponents. It was necessary, in my last discourse also, to direct our attention to the same sort of conduct, in regard to the question of our blessed *Saviour's* Godhead; where, by disclaiming the doctrine of “^b a subordinate Creator “ and Governor of the universe,” the Unitarian’s advocate has manifestly charged us with maintaining it.

☞ The same has been done, and in the same covert way of insinuation here also, with regard to the Personality of the Holy Ghost. They do not believe him to be possessed of “*Personal* existence.” This we do believe; and thus far the question is brought fairly under discussion. But then other matter is introduced, as a conclusion to this profession of disbelief; namely, that they do not acknowledge his Personal existence, “*as a Being distinct from the “ Supreme.”* Neither *do we* now, nor *did we ever* teach this. There can be no doubt, that he who should teach or believe, that the Son and Holy Ghost are Gods separate

^b Belsham’s Letters to the Bishop of London.

and distinct from the Father, *would* teach or believe Tritheism; whereas the Church of England positively declares, as her first article, that there is but one God. But we teach the existence of three Persons *in* that one Godhead; though we feel that this mystery is not clearly explained to us, and are contented to acknowledge it as one of the secret things which “belong to the “Lord our God.” We do not presume to assign limits to that Godhead which surpasses all our comprehension. We do not pretend to be wise above that measure which the Almighty has allotted to us. We are contented to believe, even without understanding them, those things which pass man’s understanding; and to rest satisfied, in this life, with that which is revealed: believing it, as a mystery which we cannot hope to unravel; and believing just so much, as it has pleased the Lord to unfold to our mortal capacities, concerning that divine nature, which no human faculties can throughly comprehend. To attempt more than this would be presumption. To refuse so much were disobedience.

ence and infidelity. *How* these things are so, we do not therefore in the smallest degree pretend to explain ; but that they are so, has in part *been* shewn, and shall now be farther proved from the Scriptures themselves : and that is the best of all proof.

That all Godhead, which comprehends all its attributes, resides in the Father, is not in dispute. That it resides also, and equally, in the Son, was shewn in the last discourse. That it resides in precisely the same degree in the Holy Ghost, as a separate Person in the divine Trinity, comes now to be proved from the same unquestionable authority. The first passage which shall be mentioned to that purpose is my present text ; “ ^c When *he* the “ Spirit of truth is come, *he* will guide “ you into all truth.” We have here a form of speaking which indicates Personality, if it indicates any thing. The expression is evidently intentional, and marks the purpose for which it is employed. The

Spirit of truth is, as we know, in the Greek of the neuter gender. The regular mode of expression in any language, would have been, not *he*, but *it*, the Spirit of truth, if the Spirit were merely an attribute of a Person. The masculine gender is however substituted for the neuter in the original language^d, where it is most important : for in this particular translations prove nothing on either side. *He* therefore is used here ; *he*, the masculine gender, expressly to mark the Personality of the Holy Spirit. The same is the case in other passages ; “^e The Spirit of truth *whom*,” denoting Personality in the same manner, “*whom* “the world cannot receive :” “^f Even the “ Spirit of truth, *who* proceedeth from the “ Father.” A form of speech so unusual

^d Εκεῖνος τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας.

^e John xiv. 17.

^f John xv. 26, “The Comforter, which is the Holy “ Ghost,—he shall teach you all things.” xiv. 26. “If “ I depart I will send him unto you.” xvi. 7. “He “ will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of “ himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he “ speak: and he will shew you things to come. He “ shall glorify me,” &c. xvi. 13, &c.

must have been employed for some sufficient purpose, which it was peculiarly calculated to effect: for to suppose any inaccuracy or oversight in God's word, is to suppose imperfection in God himself; which is both impious and impossible. Since then that form of speech must have been employed intentionally, there must also be a peculiar signification in it, and it is for the Unitarians to shew what be its peculiar import, if it be not that here maintained. St. Peter's discourse to Ananias, immediately preceding the judgment which was inflicted on him, is an express mention of the Person of the Holy Ghost, distinctly *as God*: “^g Why hath Satan “ filled thine heart to lie to the Holy “ Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, “ but unto God.” St. Paul says to the Romans, “^h The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.” We have *not* here indeed the expression of the Spirit *himself*, to mark Personality, but we find it to be indicated with abundant plainness by the

^g Acts v. 3, 4.

^h Rom. viii. 26.

whole tenor of the Apostle's expression in this place. For surely the act of making intercession implies Personality in him who makes it : since it cannot be said, that the spirit of a person, meaning a part of himself, intercedes with the rest of himself for the pardon of offenders. God's Spirit, mentioned in that sense which the opponents of the Trinity would put upon the word, might *be* moved, might *be* affected. But it could not be the active agent towards God. It could not move him to do nor to forbear any thing ; for that is the office of a distinct Person, the Person of the Holy Ghost. With the same distinction, the Prophet Isaiah also speaks : “ⁱ And “ now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath “ sent me.” Here is a manifest distinction of Persons, though not any division of Godhead. The Father, and his Spirit, are both particularly named. We could not, consistently with the common rules of language, say of a man, that a person and his spirit had done any thing. The spirit

ⁱ Isaiah xlviii. 16.

of a man is himself; not only without division, but without distinction. But here is a distinction between the Father and *his* Spirit; such as belongs not to human nature; but such as does, however incomprehensibly, belong to the Deity^k. Many more texts might easily be collected upon this point, in which acts of power and dominion are imputed personally to the Holy Spirit; and I have selected only some of those which seem to me to mark the distinction of Persons most plainly; because I would, previous to going farther into that evidence, notice the evasion which is evidently prepared in the expressions by which the Unitarians deny the Personality

^k “ We ought to recollect, that while with regard to
 “ the Holy Spirit, the ordinary current phraseology of
 “ Scripture is framed on the supposition of his Person-
 “ ality, this is not the case with any thing else, which,
 “ although occasionally personified, is not a person.
 “ In other cases, the language of personification is the
 “ exception to the general phraseology. But in this
 “ case it is quite the reverse. Any expressions that
 “ seem inconsistent with Personality form the excep-
 “ tion, the general complexion of the language being
 “ all in its favour.” *Wardlaw, Sermons on the Socinian*
Controversy, p. 289.

of the Holy Ghost. They acknowledge that God himself “¹ is sometimes designated by the expression, the Spirit of God. But they conceive, that the sense “ in which the phrase occurs most frequently in the New Testament, is that “ of miraculous gifts and powers, with “ which the Apostles and primitive converts were endowed in the first age of “ the Church.” That those, and other synonymous words, are *sometimes* so used, both in the Old and New Testaments, is not what I mean to dispute. But it is not to be said, that such is their constant, nor yet their most usual signification. The passages which have already been cited, and others also, perhaps even stronger and more explicit than some of them are, cannot be so interpreted ; but prove that the Holy Ghost has a distinct Personality, in the same Godhead with the Father and the Son ; and those gifts and powers, which are mentioned as the Spirit of God, are *gifts* of the Holy Spirit. They are not on

¹ Belsham, p. 10,

that account the less the gifts of God ; because his Person is in the Godhead, and whatever he does, is done by God, exactly in the same degree as if it were performed by the Father or the Son. God is not divisible ; and though there be a *distinction* of Persons, yet is there an absolute and perfect Unity of nature in him. The Unitarians have in this point drawn near to the spirit of the Sabellian heresy ; for it held that the Son was an emanation from the Father, but not a distinct Person ; and here we find that much the same is maintained concerning the Holy Ghost.

That the Holy Ghost is not however in Scripture described as an Energy of the Father, nor yet as signifying miraculous gifts and powers conferred on the primitive Christians, shall shortly be shewn from the word of God. But even the reason of the thing, Reason, their own boasted weapon, in which the Unitarians so put their trust, will prove the contrary. For if it be only an operation of God, the Holy Spirit can possess no *active* powers. If it be merely the operation of sending forth power to

work miracles, then whenever that operation was suspended for a time, the Holy Ghost ceased for a time to be; and has now ceased altogether to exist. So that by that hypothesis it would appear, that there is now no Holy Spirit acting in the world, nor influencing the thoughts and actions of man! The deniers of his Personal existence must therefore fall back from that position, and instead of interpreting the expression, as if it signified only miraculous gifts and powers, must take shelter in the doctrine of its *always* signifying that, which we allow to be its signification in *some certain* places; namely, the Spirit of God, in some such sense as we say the spirit of a man; or as an energy, or quality of God. But when we see such acts of substantial personality ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as are often ascribed to him in the word of God, how is it *then* possible to understand of him otherwise, than that he is a Substance, or Hypostasis, or Person? When we find him opposed to evil spirits, as persons, it is manifest that he also must be understood to be such: as when it is

said, (1 Sam. xvi. 14.) “ the Spirit of the
“ Lord departed from Saul, and an evil
“ spirit from the Lord troubled him.”
This evil spirit was a person, similar to
that (2 Chron. xviii. 20.) which “ came
“ out, and stood before the Lord,” to per-
suade Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth
Gilead : and so therefore was the Holy
Ghost, the Spirit of the Lord, which left
Saul, when the other came to possess him.
In the account of the creation, which was
unquestionably the work of God, we find
nevertheless the Holy Spirit, as well as the
Son, acting as distinct Persons, (Gen i. 2.)
“ The Spirit of God moved upon the face
“ of the waters.” He brooded over them,
as a bird over her young ; for that is the
accurate signification of the Hebrew word,
(מְרַחֵף,) and that certainly describes the
agency, not of a quality or attribute of the
Father, but of a distinct Person. The ex-
pression of the Prophet Isaiah, (xlviii. 16.)
“ And now the Lord God, *and* his Spirit,
“ hath sent me unto thee,” marks the Spi-
rit for a distinct Person from the Father.
So also the same Prophet, (lix. 19, 20.)

“ When the enemy shall come in like a
 “ flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up
 “ a standard against him. And the Re-
 “ deemer shall come to Zion, and unto
 “ them that turn from transgression in Ja-
 “ cob, saith the Lord.” And here he dis-
 tinguished the Holy Ghost as a Person,
 not as an energy or attribute; as one to
 whom, as to the Son and Redeemer, a
 particular and distinct office is assigned.
 Thus does the word even of the Old Tes-
 tament afford manifest testimony to the
 Personality of the Holy Spirit.

Let us however see what ground they
 have for asserting, that “ the Spirit, in the
 “ *New Testament*, most frequently denotes
 “ only gifts and powers.” The converts
 at Ephesus, who are mentioned in the 19th
 chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, had
 been converted, as it seems, in no very
 perfect manner, to the Christian faith.
 They could not but have heard of the
 miraculous *gifts* and *powers* which the
 preachers of those days possessed. But
 the mystery of the Trinity had not been
 made known to them. *Therefore* they pro-

fessed utter ignorance of the Holy Ghost's existence. "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." They could not deny, that they had heard of miraculous gifts and powers in the Church at that time, because they were by no means uncommon: and had that been all which the Holy Spirit signified, had that been the usual meaning of the name, they could not possibly have remained ignorant of that meaning. But they seem to have been converted to *John's* baptism only, without an explanation of the *full Christian* doctrine. Now John no where, so far as we have any knowledge or ground of conjecture, taught any thing respecting the Holy Ghost; except when he bare record, ^m that the resting of the Spirit upon Christ was a peculiar indication that he was the Lamb of God; and there indeed he spoke of a bodily and personal appearance then before his eyes. *His* doctrine was, as St. Paul here says, repentance and belief on him who should

^m John i. 33.

come afterward: that is, on Christ Jesus. If the Holy Ghost had signified only miraculous gifts, the disciples at Ephesus must have heard of them; for they were then well known to reside in the Christian Church. But since that name denoted one of the Persons in that Trinity, whom it was not *John's* office to preach, those disciples had heard nothing of him. Had they been baptized to our Saviour's baptism, the case would have been otherwise; and St. Paul's question implies it; "Unto what *then* were ye baptized?" For in that case they *must* have learned the Holy Ghost equally with the Father and the Son.

"ⁿ Jesus," says the Evangelist, "was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness." Is the Spirit here only gifts and powers? "^o Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the *Holy Ghost*" (literally the ^p Spirit, the Holy One) "descended in a *bodily shape* like a

ⁿ Matt. iv. 1.

^o Luke iii. 21.

^p Το πνεῦμα το ἅγιον.

“dove upon him; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” I have cited this passage at length, because it is a most remarkable manifestation of the three Persons in the Holy Trinity at the same time: the voice of the Father from heaven; the Son incarnate upon earth; and the Holy Ghost in a bodily representation in the air. It cannot here be said, that the Holy Ghost means merely miraculous powers; for besides the remarkable distinction of Person which the original language marks, “the Spirit, the “Holy One,” there was a *visible appearance*; and no mention is made, at that time, of any endowment with miraculous powers. ⁹If men find it convenient to

⁹ St. Paul says, “The Spirit searcheth all things, “even the deep things of God.” This then is no description of the power of God. (See Pearson, Art. VIII.) If the Holy Ghost were not a Person, he could not be blasphemed; (see Pearson, *ib.*) and that the Holy Ghost is not the same as the Father or the Son, is shewn in the same place. He “*proceedeth from the “Father.*” John xv. 26. “He shall receive *of mine.*” John xvi. 14. “If I go not away, the Comforter will

fancy a thing, in order that they may build upon it a system of faith, or rather of unbelief, they do so at their own peril. Only let them not say that the New Testament warrants their dangerous and presumptuous imaginations. Let them not talk of doing things in a figure, as one of the ^r leaders of Unitarianism does, in regard to our Saviour's death and atonement. Wherever the words of Scripture will bear a literal sense, the literal sense is the best; the only one indeed on which we are authorized to build. For the word of God was sent to give us instruction, not to receive our emendations; and if we once depart from the obvious signification, we give a loose to fancy, and open a way to all the capricious insolence and licentious imaginations of man. That same marked distinction of the three Persons in the Godhead is found in the Epistle to the

“not come unto you; but *if I depart* I will send *him unto you.*” (John xvi. 7.) The one Person was to be absent, when the other was present; consequently, as *Persons*, they could not be the same.

^r Dr. Priestley.

Hebrews; of which our adversaries are not disposed to allow that it proceeded from St. Paul. Without entering here into that question, thus much may be asserted without contradiction, that it was written in that same age, and was received as sound Christian doctrine by the primitive Churches; whatever might have been the questions raised as to its true author^s. To Christians therefore the Epistle is good and sufficient authority. Therein Christ is said to have “^t offered himself by the “ Holy Spirit without spot to God.” We have in this place distinct mention of our Saviour, of the Holy Ghost, and of the Father, who must be denoted by the word

^s Origen was of opinion that St. Paul *was* the author, though the Unitarians have named his authority as supporting the opposite opinion; and in the extract which they cite, have fraudulently suppressed the part which they must have known to support the authenticity of the Epistle. Origen says, concerning any Church which shall hold it for a work of St. Paul, *αυτη ευδοκιμειτο και επι τουτω* and in his Epistle to Africanus declares his intention to publish an argument, *εις αποδειξιν του ειναι Παυλου την επιστολην*, against those who disputed it.

^t Heb. ix. 14.

God in this place, because the other two Persons are particularly specified. Neither will this mention of the Holy Spirit bear any other sense than that of Personality: for he is described as the agent, through whom Christ offered himself to God the Father, as the sacrifice for mankind. Again he is distinctly personified by St. Paul, when he says, “^u We have access by one “ Spirit to the Father.” If this do not denote Personality, what does it denote? We have access to one Person by the agency of another. Miraculous gifts and powers, into which the Unitarians would explain away the positive personal appellation, can give no access to God, though access may be given upon account of them. But the Holy Ghost, who immediately conferred such gifts and powers, who worked with those on whom they were conferred, and whose aid and fellowship still, though not still visibly, supports all true Christians; he does give us access to God. He does it through the good works which he

^u Eph. ii. 2.

produces in our conduct, and which enable us to prefer our humble claim to a share in the gracious and all-powerful intercession and sacrifice of our ever blessed Redeemer.

In the same manner also the Spirit is mentioned to the Corinthians, as personal, and distinct from the Father : “ ^x The Spirit “ searcheth all things, even the deep things “ of God.” St. Peter’s judgment on Ananias has already been adduced : “ ^y Why “ hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the “ Holy Ghost? — thou hast not lied unto “ men, but unto God.” In this place the name and power of God unequivocally attributed to the Holy Ghost, plainly shew his participation in the Godhead ; while the many expressions of distinct Personality above mentioned, establish, so far as we can comprehend it, and yet farther, his existence as a separate Person in that Godhead.

The evidence on this point would however not be complete, were we to omit

^x 1 Cor. ii. 10.

^y Acts v. 3, 4.

those two most remarkable and significant passages which are contained in the form of baptism, as it was ordained by our Saviour himself, and in the blessing used by his Apostles: “^z Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Now let us call to mind what was the state of all nations at the time when this commandment was given. The Roman power had extended itself over all the countries around Judæa, and indeed over the whole civilized world. Wherever their arms established their empire, its officers, civil and military, stationed upon their conquests, conveyed the religion of Rome; which was the most corrupt sort of Polytheism. They were ever ready to adopt, as objects of worship, the deities of any state which they conquered. Nay, we know that it was proposed at one time, to enrol Christ himself among the multitude of their Gods; and the unsociable tenets of Christianity, which did not

^z Matt. xxviii. 19.

admit any communion or participation in God's honours, alone prevented it from being done. The other nations also of the world were, without exception, Pagans; and all worshipped more than one God. The Christian faith was sent forth to correct and reform those erroneous conceptions and idolatrous practices. It taught, that the world was reconciled to the one only God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; and that men should thenceforth turn from those vanities in their worship, as St. Paul instructed the Athenians, and adore the one, living, eternal, and only true God. To those nations then, brought up in such mixed worship of many deities; to those nations, did our Saviour send his Apostles to make disciples of them, and to turn them from their own mistaken worship, to one which acknowledged only one God, in the strictest possible sense; and in order to effect that conversion, they were to baptize them in the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Let any person of common sense and judgment put the question upon

this to himself. Was it probable that any *man* of sound judgment, was it possible that any inspired teacher, and above all others, that the Christ himself, should have proposed to those Pagan worshippers of many deities, a form of initiation, wherein three names are mentioned equally in the Godhead, if it were not absolutely necessary so to do? Could he, above all others supreme in wisdom and every perfection, or could even any *man* of common discretion, have layed such a snare for persons strongly tinctured with their prejudices, as to name unnecessarily three distinct Persons in an act which ascribed authority and Godhead to each of them; at the risk of giving a handle for relapsing into that vice to which the Jews had once been so fatally inclined, and in which their neighbours on every side, to whom that rite was to be communicated, were at that very time deeply involved? Would the Apostles have ventured upon a doctrine which bore so dangerous an appearance, unless it had been a matter of indispensable necessity to give them intimation of this mys-

tery from the first; unless it had been essential to the true profession of Christianity so to do? The argument, it must be observed, applies with equal force to all the three Persons in the blessed Trinity; and sets the divinity of the three upon precisely the same footing. So does the apostolic benediction, “^a The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” No one Person was to be omitted, because the blessing of *God* was fully implored on the converts; who were to understand that the three operations of the three Persons in the Godhead were alike essential to God’s blessing. The Holy Spirit was therefore, in the opinion of the Apostles, and of our Saviour himself, as much and as distinctly entitled to the honour of God, as either of the other two Persons. His comforting aid was deemed necessary to accompany the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son; and his name was solemnly and particu-

^a 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

larly invoked in conjunction with theirs, to give authority and sanction to the initiation of Christian converts.

The passages of Scripture which have now been adduced, are some of those which apply forcibly to the separate Personality of the Holy Ghost; a doctrine layed down distinctly in the word of God, though the manner and method of it be not distinctly comprehensible to our limited faculties, no more than the separate Personality of the Father and the Son in one and the same Godhead with the Holy Ghost. Many others might be brought forward, to shew the agency of the Holy Spirit, particularly, upon the souls of men; but it has been my endéavour to avoid those, for which the subterfuge of interpreting the name as an attribute of, or as an emanation from, the Father might be held out. That, in regard to the Person of the Son, was the heresy of Sabellius in a very early age of the Christian Church; and the Unitarian evasion of interpreting the name of the Holy Ghost, so as to signify only miraculous gifts and powers bestowed by the Father, is not far

removed from it. Still nearer does it approach to the heresy of Macedonius, which was solemnly condemned in the first Council of Constantinople. He taught that the Holy Ghost is “a *divine energy*, diffused “throughout the universe, and not a Person “distinct from the Father and the Son:” in substance nearly the same with the miraculous gifts and powers, which modern Unitarians would impose on us, contrary both to the word and sense of the holy Scriptures.

These licentious fancies of human imagination are not now, as we see, for the first time devised; nor are they now for the first time censured as violations of the pure Christian faith. The opinion of the early Fathers is decidedly the same with that of the Church of England on this point^a. But

^a The disciples of Polycarp, who was himself St. John's disciple, must be held to have known his doctrine. These are their words: Ερρωδαι υμας ευχομεθα αδελφοι ζοιχουντες τω κατα το ευαγγελιον λογω Ιησου Χριστου, μεθ' ου δοξα τω Θεω και Πατρι και Αγιω Πνευματι, &c. *Smyrncorum Epistola de Martyrio Polycarpi*.

Huic autem plane gemina est δοξολογια Comitum Ignatii, sub finem Act. Martyr. S. Ignatii “Glorificantes

though the divine word so plainly upholds our doctrine, and the primitive churches following the apostolic age explained that word even as ours does; yet all are alike rejected, when they contradict those ideas, with which men fancy that their own reason has inspired them: all must be made to bow before the arbitrary conceits of the sceptic.

“ in ipsius venerabili et sancta memoria Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum: per quem, et cum quo, Patri gloria, et potentia, cum Spiritu Sancto, in sancta Ecclesia in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.” *Bulli Def. Fid. Nicæn.* §. xiii. pp. 55, 56.

Irenæus marks the distinction of the Holy Ghost from the Father, not as an Energy, but as a Person. Speaking of the Son, he says, “ Ab omnibus accipiens testimonium, quoniam vere homo et vere Deus, a Patre, a Spiritu, ab angelis, &c.” lib. iv. c. 14. A little farther onward he says also, there is one God the Father, one Son, one Holy Spirit. Again in the 37th chapter of the same book he says, that the Son and Holy Spirit are those to whom the Father addressed himself when he said, “ Let us make man in our image,” &c. So the same Father distinguishes between the Spirit as a Person, and the Spirit as not a Person, lib. v. c. 12. See *Bulli Def. Fid. Nicæn.* §. ix. p. 82, 83.

These, it must be remembered, were some of the very earliest Christians, who derived their doctrine from the immediate word of the very Apostles themselves.

Into such difficulties do men run themselves, when they must needs explain the mysteries of the kingdom of God farther than he has explained them; when, in the pride of their hearts, they disdain any prostration of their mortal and circumscribed understandings before his supreme and incomprehensible Godhead. If we must comprehend every thing before we can believe it, let us make trial of the meanest herb on the face of the earth; and see whether we can account for all its properties, without throwing ourselves blindly on God's will and pleasure. *How* do the prolific properties of the earth cause its increase? *How* are its leaves and flowers formed? And in what manner do the sap and juices produce those particular forms, and that specific mode of increase, which belongs to each one in particular? We shall perhaps be told, that it is their nature so to spring and so to increase. But this is not to explain, but to evade the difficulty. It is the nature of God, that in the Godhead there should be three Persons. The manner in which this sublime mystery of the Trinity in Unity

comes to pass, is not more removed from our knowledge, than the mode and principle of increase in the commonest plant; or than that which may be more generally intelligible, the power of action in ourselves and every living creature. Does the Unitarian doubt whether the plants draw nourishment from the earth, because he cannot comprehend how the same earth communicates to each one its own proper shape and colours? Does he doubt whether man has power to move, because he cannot see *how* his will communicates motion to his muscles? because he cannot discern the process, by which the invisible and unsubstantial inclination acts upon the gross and corporeal frame? No: the fact is before him; and he is ready to make that prostration of his understanding before every part of the creation, which he scorns to make before the infinite and all perfect Creator. And yet to what does such scepticism lead? If we allow to it a free course without restraint, there seems to be no reason why it should stop short even of the ancient Epicurean doctrine, that God has

no concern in mortal affairs. If we doubt this, let us but hear what the chief of sceptics in our own country has admitted :
 “^b Were our ignorance a sufficient reason
 “ for rejecting any thing, we should be led
 “ into that principle of refusing all energy
 “ to the Supreme Being.”

We have thus gone shortly through some of the most striking proofs from Scripture of the Trinity in general, and of the second and third Persons in particular. We have found the existence of three Persons in one God to be plainly declared by the word of the Almighty, though declared as a mystery, and therefore with some darkness as to the manner of it ; into which we cannot penetrate farther than he has been pleased to open the way. In our present state, we must be contented with such knowledge as is limited in proportion to our abilities. We know not yet what we shall be ; but it is one glorious prospect of the blessed hereafter, that *they* shall see God “^c as he is :” that *they* “^d shall know even as also they are

^b Hume's Phil. Essays, p. 17.

^c John iii. 2.

^d 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

“ known.” If then our eagerness to understand this mystery lead us to any thing, let it be to humble acquiescence in every revelation which it has pleased God to give, and to a continued course of spiritual improvement in this life, such as may lead us to a thoroughly Christian practice. So may we hope, through our blessed Saviour, to come to that inheritance which he has purchased for us with his most precious blood ; where all uncertainty and suspense shall be done away, and the fulness of all satisfaction shall at length be granted, as a part of that reward of the faithful which now passeth all understanding.

SERMON V.

ON THE JUDGMENT BY OUR SAVIOUR.

MATTH. xxv. 31.

*When the Son of man shall come in his glory,
and all his holy angels with him, then shall he
sit upon the throne of his glory.*

THE point of doctrine which is now proposed to our examination is one, on which, as to the general idea of a future judgment, there has been an almost universal consent in all countries and all ages of the world. Whatever corruptions have been introduced into religion, however obscured and defaced its truths may have become, there has yet always existed an impression, that we must give after death some account of those things which we have done in the body, whether they be good or evil. Like some other leading truths of religion, in which,

with considerable variations indeed, but in the main ground of which a general consent has been traced throughout the world, so this most important doctrine probably came down from patriarchal tradition." And it is an argument of the excellent providence of God, that an idea which alone can check the inordinate passions of those, who are either beyond the knowledge, or above the power of human laws, has never been suffered to vanish altogether. That there is a judgment to come is not then the matter in dispute. The Unitarians, as well as ourselves, profess to believe it. But the point in question between us, respects the person *by* whom judgment and justice will be administered on that occasion.

They hold, that Christ will indeed judge the world, but yet that he will be no more than a mere man; invested indeed with a certain authority and glory, but nevertheless not acting in his own right, but altogether with a subordinate and delegated power. They hold^a, that the resurrection

^a Belsham, vii. 4.

“ of the dead and the final judgment is
 “ that sublime and infinitely important doc-
 “ trine,” which they “ conceive to be the
 “ sum and substance of the Christian reve-
 “ lation.” Of its sublimity and infinite im-
 portance, we also have no manner of doubt.
 But we do *not* conceive that it is absolutely
 the sum and substance of the Christian re-
 velation. The fallacy of their assertion is
 visible in the concluding sentence of this
 article in their confession, wherein they as-
 sert, concerning the Christian revelation, a
 part of the truth, for the whole. They de-
 clare, that “^b the great object of it was to
 “ bring life and immortality to light.” We
 hold more than this. We hold, with the
 Apostle St. Paul, that “^c the grace of God
 “ was made manifest, by the appearing of
 “ our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abo-
 “ lished death, and brought life and im-
 “ mortality to light *through the Gospel.*”
 That life and immortality are brought to
 light by Jesus Christ; is the doctrine both
 of them and ourselves. The difference lies

^b Belsham, vii. 4.

^c 2 Tim. i. 10.

in this; that we hold them to have been brought to light through the Gospel; through belief of all the revelations, and practice of all the duties therein made known, and enjoined to us for observance; of which revealed truths the foundation stone is this which they deny, namely, that Jesus Christ the Son of God is come in the flesh. Not that a mere man was then created in the flesh, as a matter of course like all other men, without having previously existed distinct from the flesh from all eternity; but that Christ, the eternal and omnipotent Son, one of the three Persons who in entire equality compose the Unity of the Godhead, is come in the form of the man Jesus, having taken upon him a proper human body, which he had never borne before that time. This is the signification of St. John's expression, that "^d Christ is " come in the flesh," and this the Unitarians deny. That very expression however implies that Christ was not naturally in the flesh. For a mere man to come in that

^d 1 John iv. 2.

flesh, in that nature which alone he inherits, were not a thing to be noticed. The wonder, the remarkable thing would be, if he should come otherwise^c. When therefore the Apostle says that Christ is come in the flesh, he gives a clear indication that the flesh was not his usual, nor his original, nor his proper nature. And it is necessary to recall these things to our recollection here. For if Christ came as a mere man, he must return as a mere man to judge the quick and dead. But though he will appear in the manhood united with the Godhead, yet he will not appear merely in the manhood: not in the manhood alone, however glorified it may be. The Unitarians appear, from the expressions employed in stating their dissent from the foundation of *Christianity*; for such it is; they appear to build upon the expression used by the inspired writers of "the man Jesus." St. Peter indeed uses that expression in his discourse upon occasion of the miraculous

^c See Middleton on the Greek Article, p. 351, 354: also Dean Magee on Atonement, iii. 32, in note, and 33, 34, *ibid*.

gifts of tongues : “^f Jesus of Nazareth,
 “ *man* approved of God among you, &c.
 It gave no presumption of mere manhood
 that the Apostle spoke of Christ, who had
 been *at the time of which he was then speak-
 ing* in a human form, simply as a man.
 The same expression is used in the Old
 Testament, of persons whom nobody ever
 supposed to be any thing less than angels.
 The three angels who appeared to Abrah-
 ham and to Lot are simply called men, be-
 cause they were in fashion as men. There-
 fore St. Peter also speaking of the minister
 of Jesus Christ in his humiliation, who
 under the form of man, calls him a man.
 But having thus informed the hearers, that
 he whom they had seen as a man among
 them, was the same from whom the miracu-
 lous gift of the Holy Spirit proceeded,
 he goes on to shew that the same man
 was also the Lord, applying to him David's
 words: “ I foresaw the Lord always before
 “ my face, &c.” He then proceeds to shew
 that this Lord is he who was never to s

^f Acts. ii. 22.

corruption, which David himself did see : and that the man Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, is now no longer in his mortal state of humiliation ; but that the divine power has taken up the manhood to the throne of God ; has made this same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ.* St. Paul too, when he preached to the Athenians, declared that “^g God will “ judge the world in righteousness by that “ man whom he hath ordained.” The Apostle was then discoursing to persons who did not deny the existence of a Deity, though their idea of his nature and attributes was miserably confused and corrupted ; and among the greater part of them a multitude of separate deities were, each in his particular time and place, the objects of adoration. . . . The doctrines in which, (to speak of the mass of the nation, of a general assembly,) the doctrines in which they were entirely ignorant were, the Unity of God, together with the Mediation and Atonement made by one of the three Persons

^g Acts xvii. 31.

in that Unity, under the fashion of a man : and also the judgment hereafter to be administered by him. In this his first address therefore, the Apostle does not enter at large into the particulars of that mystery ; but contents himself with a general opening, and with facts less likely to move dispute. He tells them, that one God, incorporeal and invisible, made and governs all things, and that he will judge the world at its termination “ by that man whom he “ hath ordained :” a man to all intents and purposes in his human nature, so far as a real human body and soul could constitute a man ; though that manhood was mysteriously united to one of the Persons in the Godhead. But as this last part of the Christian doctrine was more difficult of comprehension, and more liable to perversion, among a conceited and cavilling people ; so he does not think fit to disclose it at this his opening of the Christian faith. He does not even mention Christ by name, nor give any hint of his ministry in the flesh ; but contents himself, in this his first address, with that which was most easily in-

telligible, as reason and sound judgment required, that he should do. “^h He fed “them,” to use his own expression to the Corinthians, “with milk, and not with “meat; because they were not able to bear “it.” But wherever the whole doctrine of the Gospel was *fully* preached, we find abundant mention of our Saviour, as the Son of man, as the man whom God had ordained to take away our sins, and under other similar expressions. Nor is there any reason why we should shrink from the ⁱUnitarian’s blasphemous sarcasm, who without scruple imputes a “mean equivocation” to Christ and his Apostles, whenever they speak of his manhood, as distinct from the honours and powers of the Godhead. The style of insolence with which the writers of that party treat the most sacred expressions of God’s word carries its own cure with it. It must inspire disgust and offence, without carrying the slightest weight of conviction. The question here depends on the authenticity of those parts of Scripture, which un-

^h 1 Cor. iii. 2.

ⁱ Belsham, p. 36.

equivocally attribute Godhead to our Redeemer. And they are not shaken, and cannot be shaken, by any of these false designing arts, which endeavour to hold out a shew of criticism, while they are really no better than ^k arbitrary alterations ; which are invented in order to get rid of those passages, which in the most unequivocal manner ^l refute the blasphemous doctrine of Christ's mere manhood. That God is the Judge of all mankind who shall render to all according to their works, appears most evidently from every part of the word of God. That the man Jesus shall execute precisely the same high office is as unquestionably revealed. The humble piety of a Christian teaches him, not to reject either part of the doctrine, however difficult he may find it to arrange, in a manner intelligible to his comprehension, this distinction with this union of divine and human nature in Christ Jesus. The unbeliever, on the contrary, feels it to be beyond his reason to comprehend this mys-

^k See Sermon VI.

^l See Sermon II.

tery, and therefore insolently rejects it; and thinks to get clear of the question by a profane sneer at the idea of a God-man. It is never to be forgotten, it can scarcely be enough impressed, that a Christian *must* be “ meek and lowly in heart.” He *must* take God’s revelations thankfully, even as they are; and never imagine himself at liberty to reject or modify, because he may not understand them. All infidelity, if it be not founded in conceit, is principally upheld by it. Pride was the vice which cast Satan down from heaven; and those who will follow his pride, must expect to be involved in the endless perdition which is its necessary consequence. JP

But let us turn to the holy Scriptures, and examine the passages which relate to the final judgment, and to the high office of administering justice on that occasion, which they assign to Christ the Almighty Son, either by the name of the Son of man, or by that of the man Jesus, or by any other similar appellation. We find, in the first place, the text which I have taken this day to stand directly in opposition to the

adversaries of the established Christian faith. And that text is one of great importance. The words are those of our Saviour himself, when he was revealing to his Apostles, so far as he thought it proper for them to know it, the manner of his appearance to judgment at the last day. There will probably be no question, as there cannot reasonably be any doubt, that he *then* intended himself by the Son of man, though the expression has occasionally been otherwise applied, especially to the Prophet Ezekiel. But it is very evident from the context that Christ was not then describing himself as a *mere* man: “^m When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him”—what is the glory in which he is here described as coming? His own proper glory, not one delegated to him for the occasion; “ⁿ the glory,” as he says to the Father, “which I had with thee before the world was:” the glory of one surrounded by the attendant angels, and

^m Matt. xxv. 31.ⁿ John xvii. 5.

coming in the clouds of heaven. But such glory belongs exclusively to God Almighty; as our blessed Saviour in another place describes it, where he says, “ ° Whosoever
“ shall be ashamed of me and of my words,
“ in this adulterous and sinful generation,
“ of him also shall the Son of man be
“ ashamed, when he cometh in the glory
“ of *the Father* with the holy angels.” Now God himself declares, “ ^p My glory
“ will I not give to another :” a positive declaration, which excludes from all manner of participation in that glory every created being; of whatever rank or degree. And yet Christ claims participation in that glory at the day of judgment, as he had possessed it before the world was. He must therefore judge the world, not as man alone, but as God coupled with the manhood ; for as God alone could he have existed before the world was. There is no reason whatever for supposing, that any mere man, in all respects like unto his fellows, can be dignified with the peculiar

° Mark viii. 38.

^p Isa. xlii. 8. xviii. 11.

honours of the Almighty. Such is the incommunicable name Jehovah, which has been shewn to be so often applied in the Old Testament to Christ. Such is the attendance of all the holy angels, with the right to call that glory which he enjoys indifferently his own, or the glory of the Father. *God* is always declared to be our Judge; the same who once appeared in Christ with humiliation, “reconciling the world unto himself;” and who will also come again in Christ with glory, to judge mankind for their use or abuse of such reconciliation. It is therefore manifest blasphemy, to describe as a mere man him who shall then sit on the throne of *his* glory, which is the glory of God omnipotent. The phrase, Son of man, occurs, as has been observed, not unfrequently in the Old Testament. The Jews therefore knew how it is there applied; and if there had been any tolerable ground for inferring that the expression denoted a mere man, they could not have charged our Lord with blasphemy for having declared, “⁹ Here-

⁹ Matt. xxvi. 64.

“ after shall ye see the Son of man sitting
“ on the right hand of power, and coming
“ in the clouds of heaven.” But the Jews
perceived distinctly from that expression,
that he claimed to himself supremacy and
Godhead. They therefore immediately
exclaimed, “ He hath spoken blasphemy :”
as on another occasion they did in like
manner, specifying that in which they con-
ceived that blasphemy to consist ; “ ^r Be-
“ cause thou, being a man, makest thyself
“ God.” I do not say that the expression
used on that occasion was exactly the same
as that on the first mentioned ; but notice it
here, to shew, from the Jews’ own explana-
tion of that which they accounted for blas-
phemy, that they understood him, when
upon his trial before the high priest, to
claim Godhead, in saying that he was the
Son of man who should be seen sitting on
the right hand of power, and coming in
the clouds of heaven. [†] Now every Jew
knew, that Enoch and Elijah had been
taken up to the divine presence ; and there

[†] John x. 33.

could be no *blasphemy* in any man's assertion, that he, a mere mortal, should be, as those two mortals had been, exalted to any celestial dignity whatsoever, short of actual Deity. We must take notice, that they do not reproach our Lord for any degree of presumption alone, but for actual blasphemy; that "thou, *being a man,*" "makest thyself *God*;" and he, by his silence upon that charge, suffers that sense to pass in which they understood his words. That instance of what the Jews considered to be blasphemy, when our Saviour was not upon his trial, was indeed infinitely the strongest. For though he did not at that time call himself man, or the Son of man, yet he who frequently at other times had taken those appellations to himself, or had accepted them from his Apostles, in that instance plainly asserted, "The Father is "in me, and I in him."

Our Saviour always kept his Sonship, his Godhead, distinct from the sonship of his disciples, who were mere men. He taught them to pray, "Our Father," but he joined not himself with them; for he withdrew

from them, and prayed, “My Father.” “I go,” says he, “to *my* Father, and “*your* Father; and to *my* God, and *your* “God.” He joins without losing the distinction, he distinguishes without losing the connection. He makes us to be united *in* him; but himself to be one *with* the Father^s.

This Person then of the Son, thus identified in being with the Father; this Judge of all the earth, who shall come at the last day, and whom the Unitarians represent as a mere man, possesses all the attributes of the Godhead. He calls the angels his own, therefore, when he says, that he, “the Son of man, shall send forth *his* angels:” those angels whom God “maketh *his* spirits,” but of whom it is not allowable for any one to say, that delegated power over them shall be given to any mortal. He shall come to judgment in *his own* Godhead, not as a glorified man

^s Sic jungit ut distinguat, sic distinguit ut non se-jungat. Unum nos vult esse in se; unum autem Patrem et se. *S. Aug. in Joan.*

^t Matt. xiii. 41.

^u Psalm civ. 4.

acting by commission. What can be plainer than St. Paul's testimony in his Epistle to the Thessalonians; " * The *Lord* " *himself* shall descend from heaven, with " a shout, with the voice of the archangel, " and with the trump of God." The Lord, that is, the second Person, shall descend with the archangel and the honours of God. Yet he who thus wrote, ascribed at the same time those very honours to Christ *as his own*; " † The Lord Jesus shall be " revealed from heaven with his mighty " angels." How can these unbelievers reconcile the state to which they would lower the Judge of all the earth with these things? How can they reconcile it with that previous existence in heaven from the beginning, which St. John so distinctly asserts in the opening of his Gospel? What can be the meaning of our Lord's question to the Jews, " ‡ What, and if ye shall see " the Son of man ascend up," not merely as a glorified man taken into God's blessed

* 1 Thess. iv. 16.

† 2 Thess. i. 7. μετ' αγγελων δυναμεως αυτου.

‡ John vi. 62.

abode by way of reward, of which we certainly do know two instances in Enoch and Elijah; but, “ascend up *where he was before?*” If he resided in heaven before he came down to earth, as is most manifest from hence, how dare they to call him a “mere man, in all respects like unto his fellows?” What mere man ever ascended into heaven of his own act and power, as our Saviour did? “^a No man,” says St. John, reporting our Lord’s own words, “No man hath ascended up into heaven, save he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which *is* in heaven.” The Son of man then, who is the Judge appointed for the last day, shall come in his own proper glory to judgment. And he, that very Son of man, while he was on earth speaking the words just now recited, declares at the same moment that he *is*, not merely that he *was*, in heaven: a declaration of which, if his two natures, the divine and the human, be denied, if it be a “^b mean equivocation”

^a John iii. 13.

^b Belsham.

to speak of the one distinctly from the other, no tolerable sense can possibly be made: the dreadful impiety of which supposition, no true and devout Christian can contemplate without abhorrence and detestation. The title of Son of man, that very title from whence our adversaries would infer the real and proper humanity of our future Judge, as totally divested of any participation of right in the Godhead; is yet attributed to him in the prophecies, in language of such sublimity, and descriptive of such majesty, as are utterly inapplicable to any mortal. That title is never indeed employed as an appellation of any ordinary person, nor of any one below the dignity of princes and prophets. And our Saviour takes it peculiarly to himself, to point out that he is the Person of whom Daniel so magnificently prophesied: “^c I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near unto

^c Dan. vii. 13, 14.

“ him. And there was given him domi-
“ nion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all
“ people, nations, and languages should
“ serve him. His dominion is an ever-
“ lasting dominion, which shall not pass
“ away, and his kingdom that which shall
“ not be destroyed.” The title of Son of
man is therefore not altogether an appella-
tion of humiliation; but in this place it
is clearly visible, that the honours and divi-
nity assigned to that name by the Prophet
Daniel, honours and divinity which shall
not pass away, belong to our Lord Jesus,
whom all allow to be the Judge there men-
tioned. The name may also sometimes
perhaps have relation to the human na-
ture which he bore, a real and true human
nature, but still united with the divine.
In regard to that his incarnation, he is
sometimes styled man, and the Son of
man. That incarnation of the Godhead
in one of the three Persons, is however
one of the principal points which these
Unitarians deny; and on that incarnation
our present question altogether depends.
While they deny that, they must also ne-

cessarily reject with it the atonement, for no mere man could make atonement for others. They must deny all peculiar signification in the title of the Son of man, for it can be no distinction to call any mortal by that name, because he is such by the ordinary course of nature. But it was necessary to declare plainly, that he who so often proclaimed himself the Son of God, and who was so often announced as such by the voice of the Father, or through the ministry of his angels; it was necessary to make it generally known, that this exalted Person was the Son of man also; that he truly bore the human nature of his mother Mary, and shall bear it in like manner when he shall return again to judgment. This is a material part of that divine dispensation, and shews plainly the great mercy of God in his dealings with us, that the most solemn and awful act of his authority, the general judgment, shall be administered by one, who, having partaken of our infirmities, must therefore be fully aware of them, and able to make every proper allowance for

them. Therefore, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle comforts them on that very ground: “^d We have not an high “ priest which cannot be touched with the “ feeling of our infirmities, but was in all “ points tempted like as we are.” This very provision then, which the Almighty has made in his mercy, as a source of comfort and encouragement to us and our infirmities, is abused by these Unitarians into an argument to support their denial of his Godhead, to make the Judge of all flesh mere flesh in himself, and to do away all his title to real and proper Deity! They act thus, in the face of all that evidence which was miraculously given throughout the ministry of Jesus, in proof of the truth of his assertions, that he was himself the very and eternal God; one and the same, in Deity, with the Father; though distinct, in Personality, as the Son. These are truths on which we have before insisted in proving from holy Scripture the Deity of the Son. But we are necessarily again re-

^d Heb. iv. 14, 15.

mind of them in this place, where the truth, that Christ Jesus shall be the Judge of quick and dead, is not the matter in dispute; but where we find it asserted by the unbeliever, that he will come in that capacity only with a *delegated* authority; not acting in right of *his own* Godhead, but only as a *man* empowered and commissioned by God.

St. Paul tells us, that God hath given assurance that Jesus will come again to judgment, “^e in that he hath raised him from “the dead.” But this assurance, which is the accomplishment of his own repeated prediction, and the seal to the truth of all his assertions, seems to have little or no weight with the modern sceptic. Yet this is the test to which our Lord repeatedly put his claim to actual Godhead; as when he said, “^f Destroy this temple, and in “three days *I* will raise it up.” Christ had entered into the temple, and asserted *his* right to that holy place, in which none but the Most High could possess any right,

^e Acts xvii. 31.

^f John ii. 19.

by casting out those whose occupations were profanation to it, and by the expressions which he used in so doing. The Jews, seeing him perform that act of authority, and hearing the language with which he accompanied it, demand a sign from him. Now it must be remarked, that the Jews always comprehended thoroughly the expression used by our Saviour, when he called himself the Son of God. They knew that it implied actual Godhead, and condemned him for blasphemy on that very charge. In like manner, when he here said, "Make not my Father's house a "house of merchandize," they understood that he called God his Father; not generally, as the Father of all; nor more particularly, as he is the Father of the righteous; but *most* peculiarly, "g making "himself equal with God;" as we find that he was considered to have done, by calling God his ^h own Father. It was re-

g. 1. John v. 18.

^h Πατέρα ιδιον. Justin Martyr shews that the name, the Son of God, is not applicable to Christ merely in common with holy men. Apolog. i. 44. 'Ο δε υιος εκει-

served for the Socinians and their followers to go beyond the Jews; to put a misconstruction on that expression, and degrade, if they had been able, him whom they acknowledge for their Saviour, to a mere mortal. The Jews understood that he claimed equal Godhead with the Father, and of this they demanded a sign. Very rarely did our Lord comply with that insolent demand; never, indeed, in the sense in which they made it. And when he did so, it was by a future sign, which at once gave proof of his foreknowledge, and pointed to that decisive evidence on which, more perhaps than on any other single proof, he rested his claim to Omnipotence; namely, his own resurrection by himself from the dead. To that fact then, though hitherto unperformed, he referred the Jews, as to a complete demonstration that he was very God. To that fact his Apostle St. Paul afterward appealed, as a proof

νου, Ὁ μόνος λεγόμενος κυρίως υἱός, &c. and in his Dialogue with Trypho, 332. Μονογενὴς πατρὶ τῶν ὅλων, ἰδίως ἐξ αὐτοῦ λόγος καὶ δύναμις γεγεννημένος, καὶ ὕστερον ἀνδρώπῳ δια τῆς παρθένου γενομένος.

that he, the same Lord Jesus, was ordained to be Judge of quick and dead. And such a proof it was. Our Saviour had distinctly foretold the future judgment, when all flesh should appear upon their trial before *God*. He had declared himself to be the Son of God, equal to, and one with, the Father. He had required “ⁱ that
“ all men should honour the Son, even as
“ they honour the Father;” and that, because the “ Father hath committed all
“ judgment to the Son.” He had claimed Supreme Deity, when he cried openly among the Jews, “^k I and my Father are
“ one.” If then he was actually God, all flesh is to be judged by him *as God*, and not as mere man in commission under God. That he was God, he himself put to the test of his rising again the third day after his death; and therefore St. Paul well declared, that his having so done was full proof that he was to be the Judge of quick and dead.

These are plain and direct inferences,

ⁱ John v. '23.

^k John x. 30.

consistent with the whole tenor of the Gospel, and which do not admit any contrary interpretation without violence to sense and language. They can hardly be, by this time, unknown to the Unitarians. And we cannot be too much on our guard against imitating the conduct of presumptuous men, who strive to uphold the opinions which they have taken up, in contradiction to the general teaching of God's word, by overstrained constructions of insulated and detached expressions of holy Writ. Such has ever been the infidel's constant method, and indeed their only shadow of support from Scripture; a support which, before heedless eyes, they may set up in appearance, while they are wresting the word of God to their own destruction. The truth of this question which they raise, concerning the Deity or manhood of him who is ordained to be the Judge of all the earth, cannot stand or fall alone. It is inseparably connected with the whole Christian faith, being placed on the same test with our Saviour's Godhead, namely, the resurrection of him from the dead. Against the gene-

ral and harmonious evidence of the whole Gospel, the Unitarian arrays a few selected and mutilated passages, which, if taken singly, may bear a sound which shall seem to concur with his favourite opinions; and he rests his whole system on them, without taking into the account the tenor of our Saviour's doctrine in general, as delivered by himself and his Apostles. Those single passages, like all others, are best explained in that sense which the context, and general tenor of the Scripture in which they are placed, manifestly points out. But the doctrine which contradicts the unbeliever's construction of them, cannot be so overthrown; for it is the uniform doctrine of the Christian revelation. Every thing in Scripture points to the same evidence: "If these," as said our Saviour to the Pharisees, who were, like the Unitarians, unbelievers in his Godhead, "If these should hold their peace, the *stones* would immediately cry out." The Socinians must know, that their method of torturing the words of Scripture, in order to force a particular interpretation upon them, would

not be endured, if they were so to treat the common writings of men. And they shew more respect for their own conceits, than for God's revelations, when they force and misconstrue his holy word, that they may represent it as utterly inconsistent with itself, rather than bend their pride to bow to a doctrine which they cannot comprehend, though it be plainly revealed, and expressly sanctioned by the word of the Most High¹.

¹ Bishop Pearson observes, on the question of the nature of Christ our Judge, "There is an original, supreme, autocratorical, judiciary power. There is a judiciary power derived, delegated, given by commission. Christ, as God, hath the first, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Christ, as man, hath the second, from the Father expressly, from the Holy Ghost concomitantly; for 'the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man.'" *Pearson on the Creed*, Art. vii.

Chrysostom, on a question of the punctuation of John v. 27. shews what the Church then held on this point: Ου γαρ δια τωτο ελαβε κρισιν οτι ανθρωπος εστι, (επι τι εκωλυε παντας ανθρωπους ειναι κριτας;) αλλ' επειδη της αρεστητου θειας εκεινης εστιν υιος, δια τουτο εστι κριτης, &c.

Theophylact says the same: Την γαρ κρισιν δεδωκε τω Υιω ο Πατηρ, ουκ οτι Υιος ανθρωπου εστι, αλλ' οτι Θεος, &c.

Potestatem dedit ei et iudicium facere quoniam filius hominis est. Puto nihil esse manifestius. Nam quia

*Filius Dei est æqualis Patri, non accipit hanc potestatem
judicii faciendi, sed habet illam cum Patre in occulto.
Accipit autem illam, ut boni et mali eum videant judi-
cantem, quia filius hominis est. Augustin. de Trin. lib. i.
c. 13.*

SERMON VI.

ON THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

2 TIM. iii. 16.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

117.

WHATEVER be the errors or heresies which have at any time intruded themselves into the Church of Christ, and how far soever they may have gone astray from its genuine faith, yet all have been contented to shelter themselves under the authority of holy Scripture. Others, whoever they be, who have set forth strange doctrines, have been satisfied with bringing, by art and contrivance, certain insulated and detached passages in support of their theories; and though this was done in violation of its uniform tenor and general precept, yet they seldom ventured to

do more. But the modern Unitarian has taken, as we shall see, a bolder step. He has made more daring inroads upon sacred truth ; and, with his eyes open—for the utmost stretch of charity cannot suppose the contrary, seeing that the system of his party is irreconcilable with the word of God, *as it stands delivered by him*—has endeavoured to bend that holy word to an accommodation to his own system. The charge is indeed one of the heaviest description. But it admits of indubitable proof, in spite of his general profession of respect for the word of Divine revelation. The faith which the Unitarians now profess to hold concerning the Holy Scriptures is this : That they “^a contain a revelation from God, and that they are the “ only authentic repositories of his revealed will.” But they declare, that they “ discover no evidence of plenary inspiration of the Scriptures of the Old “ and New Testament.” And again, they admit that “ the Bible, the New Testa-

^a Belsham, p. 7.

“ment especially, *though not itself in-*
 “*spired throughout*, contains the word of
 “God.” Thus they prepare the way for
 admitting or rejecting just so much, or so
 little, as may serve their purpose. I pro-
 pose in this discourse to examine this their
 admission, and to see how far it is discor-
 dant from the doctrine of the Church of
 England, and from the truth. We will also
 observe how far their own practices have
 shewn that respect, which their own ad-
 mission demands from them, towards those
 sacred writings; especially in regard to
 their treatment of the New Testament in
 their New, and, as they are pleased to style
 it, Improved Version.

Now it is not any part of the doctrine of
 our Church to maintain the plenary inspi-
 ration of Scripture, if by plenary inspira-
 tion it be intended, that *every several word*
 was suggested by the Holy Ghost. Yet
 still we do assert, that the Scripture ^b is in-
 spired throughout, as to the doctrines there-
 in delivered, and even as to the guarding of

^b Burnet, XXXIX Articles, Art. vi.

the language from any error in faith or practice. This assertion however applies, of course, only to the canonical books. Respecting those which are called Apocryphal, our Church, since the Reformation, has ever held a different opinion. We maintain 'that the books admitted by our Church into the canon of Scripture, are *so far as this* inspired throughout; though we do not hold that the very words, and every particular expression, proceeded from the Holy Spirit. St. Paul himself indeed tells us so much, and makes a distinction between those exhortations which were his own, and those which came expressly from God. For instance, when mentioning his own labours and sufferings, he says, " ^d That which I " speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but " as it were foolishly." In like manner, to the same Corinthians, he distinguished in his former Epistle between the precepts of his own advice, and those of divine command. In his injunctions to married persons, he first gives a precept founded on the original

^c Burnet, XXXIX Articles, Art. vi. ^d 2 Cor. xi. 17.

and express institution of God; “^e Unto
“ the married I command, yet not I, but
“ the Lord, Let not the wife depart from
“ her husband :” afterward he continues,
“ But to the rest speak I, not the Lord.”
We may not however suppose that these
precepts, which the Apostle calls his own,
were destitute of the superintending guid-
ance of the Holy Ghost; though he marks
them, as not forming a part of the express
commandment.

The Unitarians profess general belief in
the Scriptures, because the inspiration of
them cannot generally be questioned, with
any appearance of reason. But they object
to the “ plenary inspiration” of them, not
on account of such passages as evidently
do not require particular inspiration, be-
cause they are manifestly within the com-
mon scope of human wisdom; but because,
in disavowing the inspiration of the Bible,
they open a way, as they imagine, for the
rejection, or alteration, or mutilation, of
any texts of Scripture which militate most
strongly against their system. Like the

^e 1 Cor. vii. 10.

Pharisees of old, they make the commandments of God of none effect, and by an art more unjustifiable even than theirs. The Pharisees had indeed a tradition, which set itself up to oppose, and even to overrule, the written Law. But they never presumed to change nor falsify the words of that Law. They did not presume to call that the word of the Lord, which they had substituted for his word. They ventured not to touch its precepts and threatenings, in the way of alteration or emendation. But these Unitarians, as they call themselves by way of distinction, avowing respect for the Gospel, seek, by impeaching its integrity, to undermine and overthrow it: and being fully aware that its doctrine is directly opposed to theirs, arbitrarily cut down, disguise, and pervert, its peculiar and essential truths. They profess, at the same time, to publish a more true and correct version of that, which they cannot possibly be ignorant that they have corrupted and mutilated in the most audacious, fraudulent, and unjustifiable manner. Strong as these expressions may appear, I doubt not but

that every one, who shall at all have examined into their “New and Improved Version,” has found them to be not only justified by the treatment which the word of God has received at their hands, but rendered absolutely necessary, by the deceitful professions which they hold out to draw in those who are not aware of their dishonest arts ; to allure them to the snare which is made ready, in the corrupted text and deceitful notes of that “New and Improved Version.” They profess to take for their foundation a careful and accurate Greek text^f. And since the common and authorised version is not sufficiently correct for them, they resort to another, made, as they say, by one of our ^gArchbishops. Such professions carry an appearance of fairness. But it is no more than appearance, and vanishes so soon as we examine at all into it. In truth, the authorised version is too well known, to have been altered without immediate detection ; and is too manifestly opposed to their peculiar doctrines, to be

^f Griesbach’s.

^g Archbishop Newcome.

left unaltered in a version published by them. The version of the Archbishop, whom they profess to follow, is comparatively in few hands; and it might be believed, by those who have not seen it, that all their alterations are copied from thence. This is obviously their reason for holding up his version as their model, when in truth they have departed even from it in many very material instances, without any notice given of such variation. Nor have they dealt more faithfully with the Greek text, in that edition which they profess to hold in such estimation; principally perhaps making such profession, that they may depreciate every other in comparison with it. For they talk largely of the incorrectness of all other editions; as if errors, and those of material consequence, had abounded in all, till this made its appearance. Now the fact is found to be directly opposite to their assertion, as upon accurate inquiry will be easily perceived. For example, let us take the Gospel by St. John; for it is of the greatest consequence in this present question, because it is the fullest on the subject

of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, as the Unitarians well know; and it is the one of all others which they would most gladly set aside, on account of the unequivocal attestation which it bears to our blessed Saviour's actual and perfect Godhead. In this Gospel, numerous, extremely numerous, as are the smaller variations, which the diligence of the learned and studious has discovered in the different copies of the New Testament; yet among all of them, and they amount to more than 1700^g, there are not by the largest estimate more than ten of any real importance to the sense^h: and even they are not now brought to light for the first time, but have been observed and pointed out one hundred and fifty years since. Surely then there is but little occasion for talking, as those editors do, of the great superiority, as to purity, of that Greek edition which they profess to have used. There would have been but little ground for it, even if they had ad-

^g 1787.

^h Consult Nares on the Unitarian Version, Introduct. p. xxx.

hered faithfully to its text. But it looks very suspicious, when we detect them in departing from it precisely in those places, where the maintenance of their cause requires that its true and obvious sense should not be deemed the real and correct interpretation. There is too much reason to suspect, that they selected Griesbach's text for the same reason as Archbishop Newcome's Version ; and that they professed to follow both, because they were less generally known, and therefore their deviations from them less likely to be detected. And they have also a farther inducement to that practice, in the convenience of deriving sanction from those names, and under their authority imposing their own perverted doctrines the more effectually on the unguarded reader. If we may judge from the actions of this sect, and they are a far more certain test than professions and declarations, we shall discover but little reverence for the word of God ; which they presume to set aside in so many instances, that they may find a place for their own opinions in contradiction to it.

Nor can it be too much to assert this, when we find them departing from that which is received, and which *they* profess to receive, as the genuine text, whenever it suits their purpose so to do, on their own single authority ; and frequently without any notice of such variation. Such conduct, when we consider the professions held out by them, of always giving intimation of any departure from their models, can be accounted for nothing better than wilful and fraudulent deception.

And let any one consider what must be the merits of that cause which stands in need of support, and requires to be maintained by arts such as these. What is the object of holding up the name of one Archbishopⁱ, as the author of that version which they declare that they took from him? Why do they prefix to their version a motto from the words of another Archbishop^k? The motive is plain. It is to induce the world to suppose, that both were of the same opinions with themselves ; and

ⁱ Archbishop Newcome.

^k Archbishop Parker's Preface to the Bishops' Bible.

that their “New and Improved Version,” as they are pleased to call it, is the same with that of the Prelate whom they do not leave us merely to conjecture that they follow; but whose English text they openly profess to be the general groundwork of their own, from which they have never varied, without announcing to their readers all such variations. Much in the same spirit is the attempt which they have made to falsify the account of our Saviour’s birth, by bringing forward an author¹ to testify to that which he never testified. Lardner, though they number him among their party, was a diligent and faithful writer; and on account of that his reputation, they cite him, to shew that the account given in the Gospels is erroneous, and that our Lord was not born till after Herod’s death. If they could establish that assertion, it must shake the whole credit of that narrative which declares exactly the contrary. But what can we think of their fidelity, when we turn to him from whom they profess to

¹ Lardner, Credibility of the Gospel.

draw their authority, and find, as we do find, that he has asserted no such thing? What can we think of their honesty, when we read, that though he admits the existence of some uncertainty in the date of Herod's death; yet he concludes that our Saviour was born more than one, if not two years previous to that event? In the same spirit they would mutilate the Gospels, as the Ebionites did formerly, that they may justify their denial of the miraculous conception of our blessed Saviour.^m So do they now seek to revive the assertion of one of their writers concerning those Ebionites, namely, that they were the primitive Christians, and that their errors were the doctrines of the original Church. And these things they utter now, with as much confidence, as if they had not been long since completely refuted by a learned Prelateⁿ, whom they all dare to depreciate, now that he is dead, though not even the

^m See Magee on Atonement, &c. Postscript to the Appendix, p. 265, and note; pp. 266, 267, 268, 269, and note in p. 269.

ⁿ Bishop Horsley; see Controversy with Dr. Priestley.

ablest of them could give him a satisfactory answer while he was alive. What shall we think of persons who profess to receive the Scriptures as the revealed will of God, and yet do not hesitate to interpolate, and omit, and alter by their false comments, whatever stands in their way? When they meet with the distinguishing title of *the* Son of God applied to Jesus Christ, they studiously substitute *a* Son of God, and then refer us to our Saviour's question, "° If he " (God) called them gods, unto whom the " word of God came, and the Scripture " cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom " the Father hath sanctified and sent into " the world, Thou blasphemest; because I " said, I am the Son of God?" They refer to this passage, as if it had proved that the phrase, the Son of God, signifies nothing more than a prophet. Whereas, that is not the signification of the passage; which marks very strongly the distinction between those called sons of God in general, and him who bore the peculiar and exclu-

° John x. 35, 36. *q. d. n. d. d.*

sive title of *the* Son of God ; who is distinguished by the appellation of the “ only begotten,” and the “ beloved” Son, which are exclusively applied to Christ *the* Son, and not merely *a* Son of the Father. “ The only Son,” as Justin Martyr says, “ properly so called ;” “ The only begotten of the Father, begotten as his own proper Word and Power.” It is one of their artifices in their treatment of the Scriptures, which they profess to receive as generally inspired, while they alter and omit particular passages, to suit their own purpose ; it is one of their artifices, to make free in this manner with the article ; by doing away its definite signification, as if it were not expressed in the original language, and substituting *a* Son for *the* Son of God, whenever they find it convenient so to do. So frequent is the liberty which they take, of omitting, and even occasionally, when it suits them, of inserting, arbitrarily, the definite article before personal and descriptive nouns ; that this alone is enough to do away all the claim which they set up, as editors of a more correct

version of the New Testament, than that which is commonly received. For the sense of many passages, and those very important, is materially affected by such alteration; as must be sufficiently evident to any one who will examine with care the Greek text of such passages. The present chief advocate of Unitarianism gives us indeed a manifest clue to trace the motives of this their conduct, when he tells us, that “^p all Christians are children of God, being the heirs and expectants of a happy and immortal life.” Every Christian therefore, and such they call themselves, every Christian is, according to their definition, a son of God. And holding, as they do, the mere humanity of our Saviour, it is obvious what is their reason for styling him *a* Son, and not *the* Son of God, in defiance of the Greek expression, which defines his peculiar title with precision. ^q The main object of the Unitarians is to overthrow the actual Deity of our Saviour

^p Belsham's *Calm Inquiry*, p. 262.

^q See Magee on Atonement. Postscript to the Appendix, p. 19. note.

Jesus Christ, which has, I trust, been sufficiently vindicated, even by the few decisive passages which were adduced, out of many, in a former discourse^r. In their attempts to accomplish that object, they could not but see that nothing stands more directly in their way than St. John's Gospel, and especially the very opening of it. Now it is well known to Christians, that the declaration there made of Christ's Godhead was rendered necessary by the heresy of Cerinthus; who living at the same time and in the same neighbourhood with the Apostle, taught, as Unitarians now do, the mere humanity of our Lord and Saviour. Here therefore the editors of the "Improved Version" shew their respect for the Scriptures, by endeavouring to explain away, what they cannot absolutely reject, the expression, "In the beginning was the Word." They tell us, that "the beginning" here means the beginning of the Gospel, though, standing as it does in that place, it is manifest, to any unprejudiced

^r Sermons III. and V.

person, that it has no relation to the Gospel, nor to any thing upon the face of the earth. For the Evangelist there speaks of the creation of the universe: “*All* things were “made by him, and without him was not “any thing made that was made.” All common language and common sense require, that “the beginning” should here signify the very beginning of all things. And that is its obvious sense, when it stands thus singly and unconnected. If any doubt could arise upon this point, it would best be resolved by the Apostle’s rule, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual;” in this instance, the language of the New, with that of the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. Whatever be the peculiarities of expression in the one, we may reasonably expect to find the same in the other also; for both are the Greek of Jews; and there is no reason to suppose that the Holy Ghost provided for elegancies of diction, though he assuredly guarded the writers from errors, in matter and in language. We may therefore expect to find the same peculiarities of phraseology in

the Greek of both parts of the Bible; and whatever signification belongs to a term in the one, must belong to the same term, under similar circumstances of situation and connection, in the other. Now St. John opens his Gospel thus; “^s In the “beginning was the Word,” &c. The book of Genesis also opens thus: “^t In “the beginning God created the heaven “and the earth.” Whatever therefore is the signification of “the beginning” in the one passage, is manifestly such in the other also. But this did not serve the purpose of the Unitarian editors; and therefore their reverence for the word of God gave place to their zeal for the maintenance of their own peculiar doctrine. They will not gain much by a mere profession of respect in the face of conduct such as this; for though we be never so much disposed in charity to allow, that they may have some reverence for books which they hold

^s *Εν αρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος.*

^t *Εν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.*

to “contain a revelation from God,” and to be “the only repositories of his will;” yet we can hardly allow it, when their conduct manifestly proves the contrary. In the same spirit, however, do they proceed to explain away the Apostle’s declaration, that “the Word was God.” This, as they tell us, means, that “he went into retirement to commune with his God.” It was necessary to get rid of the preceding assertion, that the Word was “in the beginning,” in order to introduce this construction; and their anxiety to get rid of it at any rate, excites a suspicion that they were conscious of a more direct interpretation. This going into retirement to commune with God, is also inconsistent with the very next passage, “the Word was God:” an expression so plain and direct, that we can hardly believe it possible for any man really to mistake it. These editors, however, in their anxiety to do away our Saviour’s Godhead, seem not to have observed how they contradict their own fellows. At the end of their notes on

this chapter, they introduce the version of a private Unitarian^u of note among them; apparently with the intention of weakening the idea, that the Word means Christ, the medium of communication between God and man. If however they mean to ascribe any authority to that writer, they must admit what he evidently does; that “in the beginning” has the same signification in the opening of St. John’s Gospel, as in that of the book of Genesis, and stands for the beginning of the universe. For, as they do not adopt in their Version his change of Wisdom, instead of the Word, if they intend to confirm any thing, it should be his exposition of those terms in the translation of which they both agree; and of them, “In the beginning” is one. By their insertion of this author’s version they involve themselves in this difficulty; either that they must contradict him, or must shew that he contradicts them: unless indeed they have brought him forward

^u Lindsey. See Nares on the Unitarian Version, p. 105, note.

merely to perplex and unsettle the opinions of the unlearned and unstable, by laying before them at once a variety of doubts and objections; which would be an additional proof of that respect, which they profess to entertain for a revelation from God. As they treat St. John's Gospel, so, or even in a worse manner, do they treat that of St. Luke; where the account of our Saviour's miraculous conception^x is so invincible an obstacle to their theories; that one of their leaders^y proposed to leave it out altogether; even though another^z expressly admits its authenticity. When we see such conduct as this, we cannot but think their admission, that the Scriptures contain the only revelation of God's word, to be of little or no real value; since the very man who admits it proposes without hesitation to cut off at once a very material part of that word, because it interferes with the system which he and his fellows have set up. Their treatment of the holy Scrip-

^x Compare the annunciation in St. Luke with the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

^y Belsham.

^z Dr. Carpenter.

tures is indeed, throughout, such as would be deemed notoriously unfair and fraudulent, if applied to any common book ; and with regard to those most precious revelations of God's will, it is altogether impious and inexcusable. They scruple not arbitrarily to reject from their Version any particular passages which speak strongly against them ; and that they pitch on such constantly for rejection or alteration, is a circumstance too remarkable, and too much according with their general inclination, and the interests of their party, to be passed over as an accidental circumstance. It renders it difficult, if not impossible, for any impartial mind to acquit them of wilful and deliberate corruption of the word of life. For it is not with those two Evangelists alone that they deal thus. They attempt peremptorily to set aside St. Peter's words also, ^a marking as spurious, without ceremony, the whole second chapter of his second Epistle. And no wonder ; for it begins with the mention of

^a 2 Pet. ii.

“ false teachers, who should bring in *damnable* heresies, even *denying the Lord who bought them.*” An offensive passage indeed to those teachers, whose leading article is the denial of our Lord and of his atonement! Yet this they do, in defiance of the two authorities by whom they profess to abide always. But of such conduct it would be endless to enumerate all the instances^b. For though they tell the world, that notice is always given in their Version of any variation from that of the Prelate whose English text they profess to adopt^c, yet have they failed to do it in many instances, and those the most liable to suspicion of fraudulent suppression; because they are passages which decidedly overthrow their particular tenets respecting our Blessed Saviour^d. As they omit what it does not serve their purpose to retain, so do they add also, when they find it con-

^b See Nares on the Unitarian Version, p. 154, 181, &c.

^c Calm Inquiry, Introduction, p. iv.

^d See Magee on Atonement, &c. Postscript to Appendix, p. 16, 17, &c.

venient to weaken the precision of any expression by so doing. Thus they endeavour to evade the expression by which St. Paul couples our Saviour's name with the great God, as one and the same^e, by *inserting* the article where it does not really stand. "Our great God and Saviour "Jesus Christ;" which they would make, "The great God and our Saviour Jesus "Christ." So when the same Apostle says, "^fSee that ye refuse not him that "speaketh," plainly intending our Saviour by "him;" the editors of the New Version prefer to insert *God* instead of *him*, lest they should admit a passage which gives authority, in any other than a vicarious manner, to Christ^g.

The present time will not allow me to enumerate the very many instances, in

^e Titus ii. 13. Του μεγαλου Θεου και Σωτηρος ημων Ιησου Χριστου, translated as if it were, του μεγαλου Θεου και ΤΟΥ Σωτηρος, &c.

^f Heb. xii. 25.

^g See Magee on Atonement, Postscript to Appendix, p. 207, 231, &c. whose remarks on this place apply to the whole conduct of the Unitarians in regard to the Bible.

which they have departed from that Version of the holy Scriptures which they had selected as the most correct; and it is a matter again and again to be noticed, as indicating their reason for so doing, that most, if not all, their desertions of their avowed model are on those points, wherein the word of the inspired writer, as commonly received, is most strongly adverse to the Unitarian doctrine. If this be not conclusive evidence, yet at least it is a strong presumption; which must operate powerfully to prove, to unprejudiced minds, that their profession of respect for the word of God is no more than empty sound at best, if it be not rather “cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;” that it is assumed in order to evade the odium which open rejection of the Bible must produce, and to draw in those who might not suspect the snare that is laid for them, under cover of a translation of God’s word by a Prelate of the Established Church. Their notes on those passages which they have not ventured to remove or alter in the text, are at the

same time weak in argument; while they shew that they have kept constantly in view their main object, to bend the Scriptures to their doctrines, and not to frame their doctrines according to the Scriptures. When we find them guilty of greater violations of fidelity, which affect the text itself, we cannot much wonder at any liberties which they take in regard to punctuation. But surely stops are not to be altered at pleasure; for the sense of the passage and the course of the argument must indicate their proper situation. These editors, however, besides an unjustifiable alteration in the words, have notoriously endeavoured, by alteration of the stops, to evade a strong expression used by St. Paul in favour of our Saviour's Godhead^h. The Apostle there styles him, “ⁱ God over all, “blessed for ever.” They endeavour to change the sense by an alteration of the stops, though manifestly against the sense and natural course of the expression, and so to apply it altogether to God the Fa-

^h See Nares, &c. p. 168.

ⁱ Rom. ix. 5.

ther; striving to make out, by the change thus produced in the translation, their favourite point, that Christ Jesus was merely a man. By an equally unfair artifice, they attempt to escape from the acknowledgment, that he “^k *inherited*” a more excellent name than the angels; for they silently drop the word *inherited*, and use the words, “this day have I *adopted*,” instead of “^l begotten” thee; and thus also do they distort that important passage in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians, “^m Who, being in the form of God, “thought it not robbery to be equal with “God: but *made himself* of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a “servant, and was made in the likeness of “men.” Little indeed can be thought of their reverence for the Scriptures, when they think proper to pervert this last by a strained accommodation to their own particular system, even while one of them ⁿ confesses, that if we allow Christ’s divine

^k Heb. i. 4, 5.

^l Εγώ σημερον γεγεννηκα σε.

^m Phil. ii. 6—9.

ⁿ See Carpenter’s Letters to Mr. Veysie.

nature, the whole admits an easy explanation. With the same truth and honesty they quote Beza, as authority for asserting, that when St. Thomas said, “My Lord and “my God,” in his address to Christ at his first interview after his resurrection, the words were only as an exclamation, signifying, “O God, how great is thy power!” and not addressed to Christ. Whereas Beza really says, that they “*are not* the “words of Thomas merely in admiration, “as the Nestorians eluded the passage; “but of him addressing Jesus himself as “very God and Lord,—nor is there any “other passage in these books more express for the invocation of Christ as the “true God.” These editors however cut off all that does not suit their purpose, and quote a part only of the passage against that which they must have known to be the sense of the whole. The whole Epistle

° Hæc igitur verba quæ sequuntur non sunt tantum admirantis Thomæ, ut hunc locum eludebant Nestoriani, sed ipsum Jesum ut verum Deum ac Dominum suum compellantis—nec alius est locus in his libris expressior, de Christo ut vero Deo invocando.

to the Hebrews they discredit altogether, which is indeed less a subject of surprise, since it is so strong and pointed in support of the atonement. But they are not justified in quoting Origen as authority for the utter uncertainty of the author's name. He speaks there only of the scribe, but says of the Epistle, that it contains ^p the sentiments of an Apostle; commends any Church which shall receive it as St. Paul's; and declares his own readiness to come forward ^q in demonstration of that very point.

These, out of very many, are abundant proofs of the spirit in which the New and Improved Version is composed and published. Of their assertions, which rest merely on their own credit, it is needless

^p Origen says, that no one can tell who was the author of it; and so much is cited in the note to the Unitarian Version. But he also says, that it contains, *τα μεν νοήματα του αποστολου*, though the language is that of one who wrote from memory, *τα ειρημενα υπο του διδασκαλου*; his own opinion is, that the *matter* was St. Paul's, and he commends any Church that shall receive it as his; though the scribe (*ο γραψας*) be unknown.

^q In his Epistle to Africanus.

to say any thing. Their own strength must support them as it can. But that they have wilfully deviated from the text of Scripture; that they have followed no authority, human or divine, any farther than where it seemed to accord with their system, is most manifest. “^rThey have,” as has been well remarked, “been compelled, “not only to invent a new translation for “the text, but a new text for the translation.” What then can we think of their respect for that book which they acknowledge to contain a revelation from God? They have outgone their fathers of the old Socinian School in their denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures, as well as in the irreverence, not to say profaneness, with which they speak of the writers of them. The Racovian Catechism (p. 3, 4.) says, “No suspicion can possibly creep

^r It is well worth the reader's while to consult the Dean of Cork's very able work on Atonement and Sacrifice, and especially, on this point, the Postscript to the Appendix. The note in p. 12, and that in p. 255, are indeed fatal to the Unitarian Version, as are p. 82, 83, 84, &c. to their fidelity as to the text.

“ into the mind concerning those authors,
 “ as if they had not exact cognizance of
 “ the things which they describe. — It is
 “ altogether incredible, that God, whose
 “ goodness and providence are immense,
 “ hath suffered those writings, wherein he
 “ hath proposed his will, and the way to
 “ eternal life, and which, through the
 “ succession of so many ages, have by all
 “ the godly been received and approved,
 “ *as such*, to be *any ways* corrupted.”

This was the opinion of the disciples of Socinus. The modern Unitarians however go far beyond this, and will allow no interpretation which does not accord with their notions of reason. One of them (Priestley) ventured to accuse the sacred writers of having written on matters “ to
 “ which they had not given much attention, and concerning which they had
 “ not the means of exact information.” Another (Steinbart) affirms, that “^t Moses,
 “ according to the childish conceptions of

^s Letters to Dr. Price.

^t See Erskine's Sketches of Church History, p. 67—71.

“the Jews in his days, paints God as agitated by violent affections; partial to one people, and hating all other nations.” A third of the same communion (Semler) presumes to say, that “Peter speaks according to the conception of Jews, and the Prophets may have delivered the offspring of their own brains.” Such is the reverence of those who profess to hold that the Scriptures are the only repository of God’s will; and such the conclusions which spring from their presumption, that they may reject, whenever they think proper, any of the particular doctrines contained therein. Their arbitrary version of the Scriptures is one of its consequences; but the poison, which that offers, carries to all who will examine it with accuracy, its own antidote; and by God’s providence there have not been wanting those, who were both willing and able to guard their fellow Christians against that device of the unbeliever. May the Lord in his mercy still stretch his arm over us, and preserve the incorruptness of his word in our hands; and also a dutiful and

reverend care in us, to hold fast that form of sound words which we have learned of him, till he shall come to take account how we have occupied that most precious talent committed to our charge.

SERMON VII.

ON THE ETERNITY OF PUNISHMENT.

MATTH. XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.

IN our proposed examination of those articles which the Unitarian advocate has set forth as the confession of faith of his party, in opposition to the Church of England, we come lastly to this particular, that “they reject the horrible doctrine,” as he calls it, “of the future eternal torments of the wicked; but believe, that their punishment will be remedial, as a purgation of crimes and evil habits; after which they will be restored to virtue and happiness.” Against this their belief two things are to be urged. The first, that it is unfounded in Scripture, and repugnant to

Scripture. The second, that it is inconsistent with the nature of God's avowed designs in regard to man, because its natural tendency is to produce an evil course of living.

Now the passages in holy Writ which apply to this matter are so clear, that they appear to be incapable of misconstruction; for they distinctly teach, that the pains of the damned shall be not only inconceivable, but also eternal. Such, in the first place, is my present text, which announces, in our blessed Saviour's own words, that "the wicked shall go into *everlasting* punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." The trifling variation of expression in regard to the reward and punishment which we read in the English, does not exist in the Greek. Both are described as precisely of the same duration. The word used *in the original*, in both parts of the sentence, has not only the same signification, as is the case in our version, but it is precisely the same word^a; so that no

^a Καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰωνιον· οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰωνιον.

reason whatsoever can be drawn from this very plain and positive passage, for making any manner of difference between the duration of the happiness and of the torment. Now the Unitarian system holds the future certainty of happiness, both to the blessed and the cursed; with this distinction alone, that such happiness is not to commence equally soon with both; for after a course of purgatory pain, the most grievous sinners are to be restored, according to that system, to virtue and happiness. But if they build on the Scriptures, and there is no other foundation on which we can build securely, there is in them to the full as much and as decisive assurance of eternity of torment, as of eternity of enjoyment. That it is a horrible doctrine, if by horrible they mean such as must excite terror as its natural consequence in the heart of man, is not only the most true, but would to God that it produced that effect more deeply and more universally. For it is, if mankind would give to it full and due consideration, the most powerful of all inducements to urge them to work out their own

salvation, by mortifying the deeds of the flesh. But if by a horrible doctrine they mean to signify one which is unworthy of God, and inconsistent with his attributes, that assertion shall, I trust, be speedily proved to have no foundation. Plain reason will prove it, and, what is far more, God's own word; wherein it were the height of impiety to imagine that he could make any declaration unworthy of himself. Reason will shew, that the punishment must necessarily be eternal; because there is no deliverance from it at any time, except through our Saviour's mediation, and that mediation ceases after the judgment, when God shall be all in all^b.

^b See Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Art. viii.

The Fathers understood, as the doctrine of Scripture, that punishment would be eternal. So Chrysostom: *Ἀνώτερον μὲν τὴν κόλασιν εἶπεν· ἐνταυθα δὲ καὶ τὸν κριτὴν δεῖκνυσθαι, καὶ τὴν τιμωρίαν ἀθάνατον εἰσαγεῖ.* So also Tertullian: "Affirmamus te (anima) manere post vitæ dis-punctionem, et expectare diem judicii; proque meritis aut cruciatui destinari, aut refrigerio, *utroque sempiterno.*" (*De Testim. Animæ*, c. 4.) Again; "—qui producto ævo isto, judicaturus sit, suos cultores in æternæ vitæ retributionem; profanos in ignem æque perpetem et jugem." *Apol.* c. 18.

That punishment of some sort after death, for the offences committed during this life, is not repugnant to reason, may also be inferred from the concurring tradition of all nations, whether civilized or barbarous; of which there never perhaps has been found one which did not hold this, as well as the doctrine of reward for the righteous. And if the *reward* be eternal, as even the Unitarians allow that it shall be, what is the argument, either from reason or analogy, which can set aside the eternity of punishment? The God who has power to appoint and to execute the one part of the system of retribution, has the same power also in regard to the other part. And it has been abundantly shewn, by the conduct of holy men under the Gospel, as it had been also even under the far more difficult yoke of the Mosaical Law, that man is capable of making himself inheritor of the everlasting reward, as well as liable to the everlasting punishment. He is capable through our Saviour's atonement, whatever be the incapacity of his own unassisted nature: though the unbeliever, who

denies the atonement, cannot admit its efficacy. The equity of the case requires, that, as fair and equal opposites, the punishment should be commensurate with the reward. For if it were otherwise, let us but consider how powerful would be the temptation which such a system, as that of the Unitarians in this matter, would set before mankind. To the virtuous, they propose eternity of happiness, and that perfect in its kind; and therefore beyond the very highest idea that the imagination of man can conceive. So far as reward may entice us, here is indeed every thing *as to futurity*, which might induce us to mortify our lusts and passions at present. Yet who is not aware, that every thing promised in futurity has hardly the same influence on the human mind, and can hardly control the affections at the instant of temptation so powerfully, as the allurements which are then present, and which act immediately on the passions? If then on the opposite side were set the very extreme of misery, equally complete, and equally inconceivable in its kind with the happiness of the

blessed, but *not* equally everlasting, the preponderance must immediately be thrown where the Almighty would never have thrown it, into the scale of vicious gratification. There would be present enjoyment, opposed indeed by future torment; but yet by such torment only, as, however severe for a time, would assuredly end in the perfection of felicity for evermore. It is impossible that man should not catch at such an idea as this, if it could but be maintained. And thus amidst all the precepts of godliness, and all the exhortations and inducements to it, which are set forth in the word of God, we should have a counter-declaration of far superior weight and efficacy; an invincible persuasive to evade the whole obligation which the Gospel lays upon us. Is it to be conceived, without impiety, that the Almighty should either threaten us with that which he does not intend to execute; or that he should endeavour to bring us to the practice of virtue, by means which even human discernment can perceive to be utterly inadequate to the accomplishment of that ob-

ject? Can any religious mind endure to think, that the Most High is capable of defeating the object of all his precepts by a system of his own appointment? Yet this must be the case, if he has appointed eternity of blessing for the godly, and set against it, as a counterpoise, no more than a temporary curse for the ungodly; however long be the time during which that curse shall produce the fruits of misery. For, according to the Unitarian system, it is only in the duration of reward and punishment that any difference is supposed to exist. In the degree of both they agree with the Scriptures, which say, that “Eye
“ hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither
“ hath it entered into the heart of man to
“ conceive, the good things which God
“ hath prepared for them that love him ;” and which describe the punishment of sinners as equally inexpressible. But according to their hypothesis, those who love God and those who hate him are to be in exactly the same situation, after the lat-

° 1 Cor. ii. 9. Isaiah lxiv. 4.

ter shall have undergone their purgatorial pains. Those pains however would be far from sufficient to restrain mankind, were the certainty of their comparative shortness once thoroughly established. 4. No punishment can possibly be imagined more exquisite in its kind, than the happiness of heaven will be in its kind: none, which by the greater intensity of anguish for a limited period, could be considered as an equivalent to that which is to endure for ever. But however untenable such a position be, the case does not admit even that; for the true statement of the Unitarian theory is this: That we are to choose, whether we will sacrifice those carnal and forbidden gratifications which are at present within our reach, for the sake of an inestimable reward: or whether we will take the full enjoyment of all forbidden gratifications at present, with the certainty of an inconceivable torment after death; which torment however should last only during a long, indeed, but a determinate period; and bring us at length to the same state of perfect celestial blessing, to which the righteous

had been admitted long before, immediately after the decision of their lot. This is much the same with the doctrine of the Gnostics in the first century, “^d that the “ pains of hell shall be purgatorial and remedial, and shall end in perfect blessedness.” Now the most powerful argument that can be urged against giving way to present temptation, is the shortness of its enjoyment, compared with the eternity, which will follow. But by the Unitarian creed that argument is turned against righteousness; for the eternity of happiness in future is thereby assured alike to the obedient and disobedient; the only difference is in the relative duration and degree of earthly mortification during this life, and of penal pain after it, previous to that happiness. The former, mortification upon earth, being that which the righteous must prepare themselves to endure, according to our Saviour’s warning, “^e In the “ world ye shall have tribulation:” the latter, purgatorial pain, that which transgres-

^d Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. cent. I. part ii. c. 1.

^e John xvi. 33.

sors must expect; who, after a course of unrestrained indulgence in this world, are on that supposition to be consigned for a certain and bounded time to remedial punishment. Now we cannot but observe every day, how much the prospect even of *eternal* punishment wants weight in the minds of those who do believe it, to restrain them entirely from yielding to present temptation. And surely no man will deny, that if for eternal we should substitute temporary torment, the impression on our minds must be materially weakened; and every person who can bring himself to believe that doctrine, so alluring to the profligate and negligent, will be turned loose upon society, to do whatsoever he may think worth the risk of a long, but not an endless punishment. And is the state of mankind such, that it should seem desirable to diminish the restraints laid on mortal passions? Do we find that the evil affections and lusts are easily kept under, even by all those terrors which we all acknowledge when we think of them? And should we think more of a prospect of diminished

peril, and consequently of diminished interest? Far from it. So far as reason can enable us to judge, it is not to be denied, that it is most consistent with God's desire to prevent wickedness, that he should punish, and proclaim his intention to punish, the transgression of his laws, with pains as extreme as the happiness with which he will reward the observance of them. And as to purgatorial pains, the world has long since too plainly and too lamentably seen the infinite abuses and iniquities to which they lead the way^f.

The next point to be considered is the evidence of Scripture in support of the

^f Gregory the Great plainly enough foresaw the errors into which the doctrine of purgatory would betray mankind; and he argues well against such a supposition, both from reason and Scripture. "Antiquus iste
"persuasor in membris suis, id est in mentibus iniquo-
"rum, futuras pœnas levigat; quas quasi certo fine de-
"terminat, ut eorum culpas sine termino correptionis
"extendat: et eo magis hic peccata non finiunt, quo istic
"æstimant peccatorum supplicia finienda. Quibus bre-
"viter respondemus. Si quandoque finienda sunt suppli-
"cia reprobtorum, quandoque finienda sunt ergo et gau-
"dia beatorum. Per semetipsam namque veritas dicit,
" "Ibunt hi in supplicium æternum, justi autem in vitam
"æternam." S. *Gregor. Mag. Mortal.* lib. xxxiv. c. 19.

eternity of punishment ; and that, be it remembered, is evidence which, if plainly made out, must be altogether decisive. For though it be useful to do away the objections and silence the presumptuous assertions of the unbeliever, if that be possible, by shewing the equity of God's ordinances, and proving that they may be vindicated even by human reason ; yet that is only to be done as a satisfaction to our minds. The most full and conclusive evidence that any thing will be, is the declaration of the Almighty that it shall be.

Now the eternity of torment to the wicked is in his word declared expressly, both in the Old and New Testament. The Prophet Daniel, speaking of the last day, states the eternity of the blessing and of the curse, to the righteous and to the wicked, as distinctly as St. Matthew in my text :
“ § Many of them that sleep in the dust of
“ the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and *everlasting*
“ *ing* contempt.” In like manner Isaiah

§ Dan. xii. 2.

closes his prophecy with the declaration concerning the wicked in the last day, that “^h their worm shall not die, neither shall “ their fire be quenched.” So in another place he speaks of the lot of the righteous and of the wicked, alluding very distinctly to the *eternity of punishment* which awaits the latter: “ⁱ Who among us,” says he, “ shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who “ among us shall dwell with *everlasting* “ burnings?” Such expressions prove what was the knowledge possessed by the inspired writers under the Mosaic dispensation, respecting the nature of those pains which are appointed for sinners hereafter.

But the Unitarian always professes to think more lightly of the precepts of the Old Testament, as belonging to a system of less importance, than that which was brought to our knowledge in the Gospel. Let us therefore turn thither, and see whether the same doctrine be not expressed more frequently, and, if possible, in a manner more incapable of being misunder-

^h Isaiah lxvi. 24.

ⁱ Ibid. xxxiii. 14.

stood, in the books therein contained. And here, though we have already touched upon the passage of my text, it ought to be again mentioned among the rest; for although there had been no other to the same effect, yet this is so direct, and so incapable of perversion, that it alone might decide the question; especially when we recollect, that the words therein recorded are those of our Lord himself, and delivered in the most solemn and impressive manner. They are words which even if spoken by a prophet, as our adversaries choose to assert, and he too the Prophet, as they declare, of the last and most perfect revelation sent from heaven, must by their own selves be admitted to utter incontrovertible truths: and in this declaration of our Lord and Saviour, as we maintain, and as I trust in God that we always shall maintain, it is asserted that “these (the wicked) shall go “away into *everlasting* punishment.” To this however more abundant testimonies shall be added, that it may be seen, how well able all Christians are upon this point also, as well as on those before discussed,

to give a reason for the faith that is in them; and that, a reason which cannot be shaken, because it stands on the immovable footing of divine revelation. St. Matthew, from whom we take the record of the words above mentioned, asserts again in another place the same thing in effect; that is, the eternity of punishment hereafter, and the doctrine is there again related from our Lord's own mouth: "^k It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into *everlasting* fire." What that fire is, may be seen from the very next verse, which follows in conclusion of that discourse: "It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." The "everlasting fire" in the first part is the same, most obviously, with the "hell fire" in the last: it follows therefore undeniably, that hell fire is everlasting, and the punishment of sinners in it is equally everlasting; for it is in

^k Matth. xviii. 8, 9.

regard to that punishment that this epithet is applied to it. The fire being eternal, it follows that those for whom it is prepared must abide in it eternally. “¹The smoke of “ their torment ascendeth up *for ever* :” and those who are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone “^m shall be tormented day “ and night for ever.” Similar to this is the passage in St. Mark’s Gospel, but yet more full and urgent on this very point of the eternity of the punishment : “ⁿ It is better “ for thee to enter into life maimed, than “ having two hands to go into hell, into “ the fire that *never shall be quenched* ; “ where their worm dieth not, and the fire “ is not quenched :” and the same words are again repeated in the two following verses. How can we possibly interpret such direct and positive expressions for the *everlasting* continuance of torment to the damned, in the sense of remedial or purgatorial torments alone? Or how can we get rid of St. Mark’s declaration respecting the punishment of him who shall blaspheme the

¹ Rev. xiv. 11.

^m Rev. xx. 10,

ⁿ Mark ix. 43, 44, 45, 46.

Holy Ghost; that he “ ° hath never for-
 “ giveness, but is liable (*ενοχος*) to *eternal*
 “ damnation?” Even those unbelievers
 who reject our Lord Jesus as our God and
 our Atonement, yet acknowledge him as a
 true Prophet, and as the very greatest of
 that favoured and highly endowed and pri-
 vileged class of men. And how then can
 they, consistently with such an acknowledg-
 ment, presume to dispense thus with the
 admission of that most important truth
 thus solemnly revealed by him? It is suffi-
 ciently obvious, that man has abundant in-
 ducement in his own consciousness of sin
 and evil desert, to seek some escape from
 the dread of never-ending woe. But we
 cannot avert danger by shutting our eyes
 against it: and though we have all too
 much reason to wish that eternity of tor-
 ment for unrepentant sinners were not a
 part of God’s system, yet it being declared
 as such, it were well that men should re-
 collect the folly, nay more than that, the
 wickedness also of making their minds easy

by an unauthorized theory which contradicts the divine revelation. Perhaps the Unitarians will take refuge in their denial of plenary inspiration to the Holy Scriptures, for they dare not deny that both the passages in St. Matthew's, and that in St. Mark's Gospel are to be found there; nor does their pattern for correctness in the sacred text^p reject, or throw any doubt on the original of either. It is indeed no unreasonable thing to suppose this of them, after the liberties which they have taken with the sacred text, as was shewn in my last discourse; but it is impossible, I should hope, that any man can be so persuaded, who believes that there was really any guidance of the Holy Spirit exerted upon the Evangelists. It is utterly impossible, if they were inspired at all, that they should have been permitted to deliver as truth, that which is not truth; as the words of our Saviour, those which he never uttered; and to promulgate under the sanction of his supreme authority such doctrine, if, as

^p Griesbach.

its adversaries maintain, it be repugnant to the attribute of mercy, which is so conspicuously manifested by the Almighty, and so particularly asserted to be his peculiar property.

That the doctrine of punishment, not only inconceivably grievous in its quality, but also eternal in its duration, is the doctrine of the holy Scriptures, and of Jesus Christ our Lord himself, has been shewn; sufficiently, as it may be hoped, to satisfy any one who is desirous, not to support a preconceived system, but to ascertain the truth. It is sufficiently clear, to prevent any one who allows the word of God its fair weight and proper influence from setting aside that doctrine, which, full of terror as it is to us, is yet unable to restrain the inconsiderate and profligate from doing those things whereby they lay themselves under the sentence of that eternity of pain. Dr. Priestley, indeed, with that irreverence which is too often visible in his writings, advises to keep death, and all its consequences, out of sight. “It is not necessary,” says he, “to dwell in our thoughts

“ upon death and futurity, lest it should
 “ interrupt the business of life, and cause
 “ us to live in perpetual bondage.” On
 their hypothesis it may not indeed be necessary ; but if future punishment shall be eternal, the necessity is most urgent and undeniable. And since even that is not enough to prevent sin, we have at once an answer to the vain plea, that it is inconsistent with God’s mercy to punish man eternally for temporary offences. Man is God’s creature, the offspring of his will and pleasure ; yet such a one that God designs to effect his everlasting happiness, if he shew himself worthy to enjoy it. The two courses of present conduct are placed before him, with an eternity attached to the end of each ; eternity of happiness to obedience and virtue, and of misery to disobedience and sin. The terms therefore are equal ; and there can be no injustice, no derogation from the divine mercy in such a system. Man is indeed in a state of such imperfection *now*, it is impossible for him not to transgress. But to this

9 Sermon on the Death of Mr. Robinson. *old*

there are two obvious answers: the first, that such imperfection is not the condition in which God originally created him; the second, that in spite even of it, he may yet save himself through the atonement and mediation made by our Blessed Saviour. Though this last consideration must not be admitted by a Unitarian, for it is contrary to his system, because, denying our Lord Jesus Christ to be any more than a mere man, he sees well enough that it is impossible for such a frail being to make any satisfactory atonement for other beings frail as himself. Though therefore the unbeliever must, in consistency with himself, deny this doctrine, yet to a Christian it is distinctly revealed, and full of joy and hope. It is an abundant vindication of God's mercy, of his love and desire to promote the welfare of the human race, that where he had originally set immortality and death, blessing and cursing, in equal balance, as the rewards of obedience or disobedience; he has himself now thrown the weight into that scale which is favourable to us; he has himself found out, and

offered to us, the remedy for the fatal consequences in justice due to the transgression of his own law, a transgression which incurred the forfeiture of that claim, which man in his innocency had been allowed to make. And let us recollect, that in the case of our first parents there was no natural propensity, as there is now, to vice; but they were guarded on the one side as much as they were assailed on the other. They were fully apprized of the consequence of transgression, and yet allowed themselves to be drawn into it. After this, the very exact execution of the terms in which the original covenant between God and man had been made, could not have been more than justice. But, “where
“ sin abounded,” as says St. Paul, “ grace
“ did much more abound.” God’s mercy so prevailed, that the Mediator was immediately promised, as he was afterwards sent, to make atonement for the sin committed, and to give to mankind a power through him, of regaining that inheritance which in strictness they had forfeited altogether. That all should suffer for the fault of

our first parents, is no more unjust than that all should have enjoyed the blessed condition appointed for us, if they had not transgressed. Of that side of the covenant none would have complained; and it is only a sign of our depravity that we dare to murmur against the other; to set up God's mercy to the utter overthrow of his judgment; and in the case before us, indeed, to rely upon what *men* choose to think that it requires him to do, in spite of *his* own revelation of what he *will* do, because it is, in his eyes who cannot err, just and right so to do. “^a Nay but, O man,” says the Apostle to those who presume to argue upon that very question concerning the equity of God's decrees in regard to mankind, “who art thou that repliest against “ God? shall the thing formed say unto “ him that formed it, Why hast thou “ made me thus?” Of that humility however, which utters, or which acquiesces, in such an argument as his, our adversaries are, it is to be feared, but little conscious.

^a Rom. ix. 21, 22.

There is in all their writings too obvious an endeavour to set up their own understanding as the test of truth, to acknowledge no duty which is not grounded on reasons comprehended and approved by themselves, and to deny all doctrines which are contrary to their ideas of wisdom and fitness. And denying, as they do, that this life is a state of probation for eternity, they have a sort of security in which they may go on to any thing that the imaginations of mortal man may suggest to them. For if eternity of punishment be done away, the probation is made of none effect; since it becomes no more than a question open to the decision of every one, whether he thinks present gratification without restraint an equivalent to the temporary torment which they set up by their system, as the only future punishment of disobedience. I say, by their system, because it is clear that it is not any part of the doctrine of holy Scripture. The state of trial upon their plan is an unequal state, and one which it is blasphemous to impute to the unerring God. For we must remem-

ber that he holds out to us the idea of himself as of one, who “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;” who has appointed that the “*just*, and only the just, shall *continue* in his sight;” who takes pleasure in righteousness, and is offended at iniquity. And yet this article of the Unitarian’s creed holds out to us a system which gives encouragement to vice, as if it were God’s own; though it be really in contradiction to his unequivocal declarations.

This then is one of the inconsistencies, this is one instance of the impiety into which the system of unbelief adopted by this sect must necessarily force them. The consideration of the unwarrantable liberties which they are thus driven to take with the word of God, will, it is to be hoped, prove the weakness of their cause; and more than counterbalance, with all who have any due reverence for their Almighty Creator, those allurements which the Unitarian doctrine holds out to the vanity of man, equally as to his depravity. For their doctrine courts popularity by the

one, as well as by the other method. By reducing every thing that is revealed to a level with the human understanding on the one hand, and by rejecting what is most alarming, and what expresses the most decided intolerance of mortal iniquities on the other, it brings the acts of God before the tribunal of men to decide on the truth or untruth of his declarations, and the propriety or impropriety of his decrees. But we have St. Paul's declaration that Christianity does not proceed by such methods as these: that the devices of man must give way, whatever they may be, or however supported, when we find them to be standing in opposition to the revelation which God has made. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, *through God*, to the pulling down of strong holds," such as these are, in which the unbelievers of our days endeavour to establish themselves; and strong holds, though not so strong but that the word of God utterly overthrows them, of

human judgment and human devices. The course pursued by true Christianity is that of "casting down imaginations and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." "The preaching of the cross," says that same Apostle, "is to *them* that *perish* foolishness." Let all who hold any part of its doctrines as foolishness take heed that they be not among the number of those who thus perish. Let us all look to this; let us not allow ourselves to be drawn aside by the snares of our own vanity, nor yet by the devices of others who have been themselves so ensnared. The foundation laid in God's word standeth sure; and so long as we have the support of his own recorded revelation, let us not fear to maintain his truth, whether it be revealed clearly or in mystery, against all the sophistry of man, the allurements of our own passions, and the suggestions of the tempter.

SERMON VIII.

CONCLUSION.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

SUCH is the caution which arises as a natural inference from the consideration of that system of scepticism and unbelief, which we have now endeavoured to examine in all its avowed principles. The sect which avows them has set itself in open and declared opposition to those opinions which are held by the Church of England, with regard to the very foundations of the Christian religion. It has however, I trust, been shewn, that all the

difficulties and objections which they bring forward as impediments to the reception of the mysteries of Christianity, are grounded in no better principle than human vanity. For they set up their own reason as a sufficient measure of God's revelations; and whatever does not accord with their ideas, they make no scruple to reject it, and that too frequently in most offensive and indecent language. The great and increased activity which they have exerted in promoting their cause, by disseminating the principles of *their* persuasion, and reviling the profession of sound Christianity, cannot but have been visible to every attentive observer; from that time especially, when the restraints originally laid on them were withdrawn. But there is, I trust, nothing to be feared from their efforts as to any change which they can introduce *generally*, though much mischief may be done to unlearned or unstable individuals. The foundations of the Christian Church are laid in a rock, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Still however is it our duty to provide some remedies against the par-

tial evil which their confident and positive assertions are not unlikely to produce. Refuted as they have been, by the repeated answers of various able advocates, on the great cardinal point of our Saviour's Deity and Atonement, still do they bring forward the same assertions with the same assurance, as if no one had ever replied to or disproved them. They tell those who will listen to them, in a summary manner, that there is nothing in the arguments which are urged against them ; and even the word of God itself is treated by them with as little ceremony. For instance, one of their principal upholders, when pressed with one of those positive texts of St. John's Gospel which is fatal to their blasphemous assertion of the mere humanity of Christ, whom the Unitarians declare to have been born in the natural way of his mother Mary, a man in all respects like other men ; thinks it sufficient coolly to reply, that there is nothing in it. The Apostle's words are these : “^a And now, O Father, glorify thou

^a John xvii. 5.

“ me with thine own self with the glory
 “ which I had with thee *before the world*
 “ *was.*” It is not easy to conceive words
 more directly affirmative of the preexistence
 of our Saviour before his assumption of
 our human nature. Yet to this it is only
 answered, that “ no argument can be drawn
 “ from this ambiguous text^b.” If this be
 ambiguous, it is not easy to conceive what
 can be express or positive. Sometimes
 they will venture even farther than this,
 and insinuate, where they have not the
 confidence plainly to assert it, that the
 words which in reality tend to overthrow
 their system are rather favourable to it.
 Thus the same person says of the following
 passage of St. Paul, “ that “ if it be not de-
 “ cisive in favour of their doctrine,” it may
 “ at least be regarded as neutral.” Now the
 passage of which this is asserted is no less
 than one of the most positive for the actual
 deity of Christ, and for his coequality
 with the Father : “^d—Christ Jesus ; who,
 “ *being in the form of God, thought it not*

^b Belsham, *Calm Inquiry*, p. 148.

^c *Ib.* p. 145.

^d Phil. ii. 6, 7.

“ robbery to be equal with God : but *made*
 “ *himself* of no reputation, and took upon
 “ him the form of a servant, and was made
 “ in the likeness of men.” Now what can
 be thought of those who openly say that
 this passage upholds their rejection of our
 Saviour’s Godhead, or, at the utmost, is
 neutral on the question? What? But that
 they are determined, by the most barefaced
 though ungrounded assertions, to prejudice
 the minds of those who will listen to them,
 resisting themselves, and stifling in others,
 the conviction, which it is difficult to ima-
 gine that they do not see, and which in-
 deed their endeavours to alter the sense of
 this passage have long since shewn that
 they do see, to arise naturally from this and
 similar expressions. What can we think of
 their desire to weigh the truth fairly as it is
 declared by the Evangelist, when, finding
 that they cannot set aside the express words
 of his Gospel, they in another instance
 resort to a sort of mental reservation,
 and tell us, that our Saviour’s assertion of
 his preexistence before Abraham*, (which

* John viii. 58.

must of course, in its natural sense, do away all idea of his being a mere mortal,) means only a preexistence *‘in the Divine purpose?’* Such a miserable subterfuge is not indeed deserving of deliberate reply, for it is hardly to be supposed, that even the very person who makes it can feel himself convinced of that which he asserts. We all may know, by almost every day’s experience, how tenacious men are of those opinions which they have embraced, especially when they are taken up in contradiction to the general sense of mankind. There is, then, a pretension to superiority of discernment, which urges them forward to assert, and which supports them in maintaining the assertions which they have made. And so soon as the vanity of human reason, the vain idea of its entire competency to judge and to reject any revelation, is once set up, the voice of the whole Christian world is scorned as the dictate of deluded ignorance; the judgment of the most wise in sacred knowledge is described as the bias

¹ John x. 3.

of prejudice and bigotry. By a specious shew of what they are pleased to miscall liberality, a name which has in these days been, more than any other, abused by its application to licentious practices and unauthorized scepticism ; by an ostentatious display of that name, they lay a dangerous snare for the ignorant or the unwary, and seek to promote its fatal effects by the assurance of confident, though unsubstantial assertions. The vanity of man, especially of those who are wise in their own conceits rather than in the wisdom which is from above ; that vanity of man is naturally delighted by any idea of the supremacy of human reason ; by the notion of its ability and fitness to decide even on the reception due to the revelations of heaven itself. And indolence also, and ignorance, will betray many, who are not so open to the snares of self-conceit. How many are there, who, though they will be the last to admit it, are, from the habits of their lives, incapable of weighing evidence ; who lie particularly open to the influence of either the one or the other ; of either gratuitous assertions

and false criticism, or the delusive shew of liberality and freedom in opinion ! Some there are who will examine nothing ; but take up at once with the opinions which a specious and plausible statement sets before them, under fair, though false colours. Others, on the contrary, who advance rashly to the trial of any question set before them, though without any of that practice in examination which produces the faculty of weighing the comparative value of contrary assertions ; of sifting and discriminating evidence. For their presumption arises from that very inexperience, which at once prevents them from being fit for such disquisitions, and at the same time conceals from them, their own unfitness. How many are there, who, falling into the hands of artful men, before whom they are conscious of inferiority in understanding, yield up their assent without an effort ; choosing rather to take human wisdom for their authority, than to examine for themselves ! And yet on points so plainly revealed as these, nothing more than industry and consideration is requisite. Let the

more learned reason with the infidel, and confute his reasonings; but even the most unlearned Christian may find in the Bible, if he will be at the pains of searching there, and humble himself enough to submit the opinion which he has taken up, to that which he shall find there; even the most plain and unlearned Christian may find abundant proof of all those doctrines which Christians hold, and Unitarians deny. They will indeed seek to shake him, by urging, though falsely, the incorrectness of our version of the New Testament. But even though we were to give up all which they have fraudulently suppressed and altered in theirs, there would still remain enough of which they have not dared to get rid in that way; enough to prove the doctrines which ours and every other Christian Church holds in opposition to them.

The doctrines of the Unitarian sect strike at the very vitals of Christianity, and endeavour to secure to their followers a sort of comparative impunity, an escape from *eternal* punishment, which may embolden them to venture on the denial of the most

important truths revealed by God, and committed to ourselves for unreserved acceptance and belief. Therefore it is, that although the most particular and cardinal points of their system have been repeatedly discussed and overthrown by far more able defenders of our faith, it may yet be useful to have taken a comprehensive view of the whole, and shortly to have demonstrated the fallacy of each peculiar doctrine which that sect has avowed. The indolent may not be terrified at so short a discussion of the matter; and since the proofs on which I have insisted have been chiefly drawn from passages of holy Writ, whose authenticity is not denied, even by our adversaries, a demonstration of the falsehood of their tenets is thereby afforded, which must carry conviction to any unbiassed mind, whether of the learned or unlearned. The Apostle exhorts us to “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.” I have proceeded so to do, upon that which, in spite of whatsoever presumption may suggest to the human mind, ought ever to be esteemed the best proof: I have proved

the truth of those doctrines which we hold and they refuse, by the word of him whose word is truth. Such evidence as this lies well within the compass of the most ordinary capacity, and is at the same time the most convincing testimony which can be laid before the brightest and most cultivated abilities. The inductions which appear at first sight to be reasonable, may upon farther examination be found to have been unfairly drawn : the course of an argument may be warped, and its result unfairly stated. Of abstract reasonings, the unlearned are not competent judges ; neither are those, who, with better abilities and means of information, neglect to give the subject a full investigation. Whether they do thus from presumption or negligence, or from a prejudice previously conceived in favour of new and strange doctrines, and what are falsely called liberal ideas in religion ; neither of them is more likely to convince the gainsayer, or themselves, to learn and to hold fast that which is good. The word of God, however, on this as well as on all other points of vital importance,

is clear to all who do not seek to wrest it to their own purposes. To that we must all bow, and on its foundation may securely make our stand, and defy alike the snares and assaults of the infidel.

And let it be remembered, that we enter upon this controversy, not as on one which we have provoked by any novel opinions of *ours*, but in defence of that which has been the Christian faith from the first: which was, with very few exceptions, universally held in the earliest and purest ages of the Christian Church, the age of the Apostles themselves, and of their contemporaries and immediate successors. The Unitarian, proud in his own conceit of his own reason, will tell us, when he finds that venerable authority to be against him, that it is of no value compared with the discoveries which the freedom of religious inquiry has now made known. But that freedom is not now for the first time so employed; for we all know, that in the earliest times there were a few who erred, and overthrew the faith of some: there were those who, being unlearned and un-

stable, wrested the Scriptures, as these do now, to their own destruction. The Unitarians indeed still tell us, that they were the primitive Church, who did thus, though their assertion has long ago been most triumphantly refuted, by the learning and abilities of a distinguished Prelate of our own days. They still keep alive the dispute, and hazardous as controversy is to the truly Christian spirit, yet it does not therefore become us to permit their dangerous doctrines and fallacious assertions to pass unheeded; dispersing their mischief, and scattering their snares on every side, to poison and entrap the unwary. All Christians, but particularly those dedicated to the sacred office, are called upon to come forward; to take to them “the whole armour of God,” and “fight the good fight of faith;” but never let us forget that which in the heat of controversy is too often allowed to escape our recollection; that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” If it be almost impossible to suppress indignation at the coarse and profane manner in which things

the most sacred are occasionally treated by the adversary, yet should a strict guard be kept over the mind of him who engages in the question, lest his indignation degenerate into anger and personal animosity.

But whatever be the dangers which this controversy shares in common with all others; still it is not to be considered as altogether unproductive of good. The mercies of God are never more conspicuous, never more loudly call for our gratitude, than when, from the evil attempts of his enemies, he produces good to his faithful servants; when he makes those questions which the unbeliever agitates, in the hope of disturbing the belief of Christians, the means of strengthening and confirming that faith; by causing its evidences, and the immoveable authority on which it rests, to be laid in every possible form before the eyes of the world. Controversy on the great fundamental articles of our religion, like the moving of the waters at Bethesda, excites a salutary influence, of which those who go fairly into it, to seek the good which God has sent to man, be-

come partakers, to the establishment of their spiritual strength and health. The cavils and objections of the infidel, which if silently insinuated without reply would be more pregnant with mischief to those on whom they might light, are thereby brought before the world, examined and sifted. The poison is shewn to be poison, and the minds of many who might otherwise have rested quiescent in indolence, exposed to the influence of unbelieving cavils, without being able to “give a reason for the hope that is in them,” without having any power to confute the gainsayer, will now, it is reasonably to be hoped, “prove all things;” and if that be fairly done, they will the more effectually “hold fast that which is good.”

And would to God that controversy were confined to points which affect the basis of religion, which threaten the foundations of the Christian faith! Would to God, that where a difference of opinion prevails on points not essential to salvation, both sides alike would refrain from urging, as well as from repelling, with such vio-

lence as too often leads to bitter animosity, those opinions which they hold, and their opponents deny! Would that all parties would recollect that in which all agree, that “charity never faileth:” that charity “is not easily provoked; doth not “behave itself unseemly; thinketh no “evil!” The truth, as it is in Christ Jesus, and all that belongs to it, must be maintained. The defence of the outworks tends to keep off the attack from the citadel, and the negligent maintenance of the one may in fact betray the other. But there is no advantage in intemperance; nor is there any thing, either in reason or religion, which justifies the corruption of earnest and fervent zeal, into fiery and intemperate bitterness. Let not Christians preach Christ “of contention” among themselves; but if contention is forced upon us, let it be maintained by all believers, against those who are the enemies to the faith. Of those professed enemies the present sect of Unitarians are the chief; and it must be observed by any one who considers the state of religious dissent in these days, that

Unitarianism is, as it were, the sink into which those who have been long unsettled in their opinions, and have run through many different persuasions, often fall at the last. This is well known to be the case with a large and powerful sect, which once differed principally on a point of discipline from the Established Church of this land ; many of whose members however are now falling into this state of positive unbelief. The writings of several among the German divines also have long been tending that way ; and that imaginary illumination, which produced disbelief in the doctrines and person of our Blessed Redeemer, which has in our own times been too fatally connected with the total abandonment of religion under any form whatsoever, and with the rejection of true morality altogether, proceeded from that same, which they now set up as a sovereign principle—the fancied supremacy of Human Reason.

It might perhaps be highly resented, were *we* to say, that the system of faith of this sect is the natural offspring of licen-

tious freedom of conduct ; though immoral practice naturally begets an inclination to set aside that authority which most decidedly condemns it. But the writings of *their own* principal authors in our country declare that such is the case. One describes them as those “^g who have heard “ Christianity from their infancy, who “ have in general believed it for some time, “ and not come to disbelieve it, till they “ had long disregarded it.” Another^h says the same thing in effect ; for by “ popular “ superstition,” he manifestly intends the established faith, and by “ a rational system of faith,” the unbelief of the Unitarians. “ Men,” says he, “ who are *most* “ *indifferent to the practice* of religion, “ and whose minds *therefore* are least attached to any set of principles, will ever “ be the first to see the absurdity of a popular superstition, and to embrace a rational system of faith.” Holding such

^g Priestley, Letter to a Philosophical Unbeliever, vol. ii. Preface, p. 9.

^h Belsham's Sermon on the Importance of Truth, p. 32.

maxims as these, how can it happen otherwise, than that they should attack the established religion in whatever form it may be found? And in fact they have always been the enemies and revilers, in Protestant countries of the Reformed, in papal countries, where they have dared to shew themselves as such, of the Roman Church; in short, of Christianity itself, and for its own sake: for it is not against any abuses peculiar to any nations, but against the Godhead of our Redeemer, that their attacks are directed. Their comfortless doctrine sacrifices to human vanity that greatest of all consolations, which we derive from the doctrine of the Atonement. It annihilates, so far as they can effect their purposes, that love of Christ which was the motive of all his acts of mercy, and is the foundation of all encouragement to mortal frailty. For if his Godhead be done away, there is an end to his grace, to his spontaneous sacrifice for sin. If he were a mere creature, sent to do his Creator's pleasure, that love on which the Gospel dwells so emphatically, that love which the Apostles

and primitive Christians regarded as passing man's understanding, fades away into nothing. The act which is done from obedience in a creature to his Creator, however beneficial to others, calls not for their gratitude towards *him*; because their benefit is not, in that case, the object which excited him to the act: it is a mere act of obedience, and would have been equally performed, if it had tended to their prejudice. I need not labour to prove how utterly repugnant is such a theory to the whole tenor of Christianity, which always dwells, and takes pleasure in dwelling, on the *love* of Christ. If therefore the Person of the Son be not united in the Godhead of the Father, and so a sharer in all his acts, he can have shewn no love towards mankind in any thing which he has done. What then becomes of those Scriptures whose authority is acknowledged by all parties, which describe such love as the motive to all the acts in which Christ ever has conferred, or ever shall confer, benefits on mankind?

Even the Jews, though they also deny

Christ, can perceive and expose that deceitful profession, which sets forth as Christians those who reject his Godhead. They consider the admission of that doctrine which our Church holds in this matter, to be essential to the real profession of the Christian faith. They consider that every Christian holds Christ to be the very Son of God, and not, as the Unitarians say, the son of Josephⁱ. They argue so far truly, that if he were not the Son of God in a

ⁱ “Your doctrine is so opposite to what I always understood to be the principles of Christianity, that I must ingenuously confess I am greatly puzzled to reconcile your principles to the attempt. What! A writer that asserts that the miraculous conception of Jesus does not appear to him to be sufficiently authenticated, and that the original Gospel of St. Matthew did not contain it, set up for a defender of Christianity against the Jews, is such a system of inconsistency as I did not expect from a philosopher, whose sole pursuit hath been in search of truth! You are pleased to declare in plain terms, that you do not believe the miraculous conception of Jesus; and that you are of opinion, that he was the legitimate son of Joseph. After such assertions as these, how you can be entitled to the appellation of a Christian in the strict sense of the word, is to me really incomprehensible.”
David Levi's Letter to Dr. Priestley.

peculiar manner, if he did not preach the word of God as *his own* word, and command that it should be received upon *his own* authority; they perceive that if he did not do these things of *his own* true and real right, he could have no *delegated* right, nor any authority *by commission* at all. They perceive that he claimed to be God and Lord; and therefore, if he were not such, the person who preferred such a claim falsely, could not be a true prophet^k. They rightly understand his claims, as being layed so high, that he must have been an impostor, if he be not very God.

Would that men might attend to that caution given by the Apostle, “Beware lest any one spoil you through philoso-

^k “He preached himself to be the light of the world, which is an instance not to be paralleled in Scripture. For the duty of a Prophet consisted in his delivery of God’s word or message to the people: not in presumptuously preaching himself. Again we meet with the same example in John xiv. 6. where Jesus preaches *himself* as the way, the truth, and the life. It is manifest that he was not sent by God to us as a prophet, seeing he was so deficient in the essential character of a prophet.” *David Levi, Letter to Dr. Priestley*, p. 14.

“ phy and vain deceit !” Would that they might lay aside the vanity of human conceit, and bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ ! Such has always been the mode of conduct adopted by the Reformed Church of England : such has been her diligence in examining, and her caution in embracing or rejecting opinions in religion : such her modesty and humility in submitting every doctrine, without exception or reserve, to the test of God’s word. Had such been the conduct of the Unitarian, we should not have seen the preference openly given to their own speculations¹, before the revealed truths which have been handed down in the recorded word of the Most High. Had such been the respect of that sect towards the Divine word, we should not have heard God impiously accused, as he is by them, ^m of “ merciless tyranny” for his declared

- 1 “ To make discoveries ourselves, though the search
 “ may require time and labour, is infinitely more pleas-
 “ ing, than to learn every thing by the information of
 “ others.” *Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinson.*

^m “ If God mark and punish every instance of trans-
 “ gression, he must be a merciless tyrant, and we must

intentions of punishing the unrepentant sinner at the day of judgment. Such are the impieties into which the maintenance of opinions which have their real foundation only in human arrogance betrays men. And yet even themselves can sometimes see, that prejudice is full as unreasonable when it runs against, as when it favours the commonly received opinion: “ There
 “ is no class or description of men but
 “ what are subject to particular prejudices,
 “ and every prejudice must operate as an
 “ obstacle to the reception of some truth.
 “ It is vain for unbelievers to pretend to
 “ be free from prejudices. They may in-
 “ deed be free from those of the vulgar;
 “ and the very affectation of being free
 “ from vulgar prejudices, and being wiser
 “ than the rest of mankind, must indispose
 “ them to the admission even of truth, if
 “ it should happen to be with the common
 “ peopleⁿ.” Thus can even Unitarians

“ be tempted to wish the reins of universal government
 “ in better hands.” *Belsham’s Sermon on the Importance
 of Truth*, p. 34.

ⁿ Priestley’s Letter to a Philosophical Unbeliever,
 Part ii. Letter 5.

argue, when they do not perceive how much the argument makes against themselves, and yet suffer conceit to lead them on in the maintenance of a favourite hypothesis, even in the very face of expressed conviction!

When such are the principles of this sect, that they stand in direct opposition to every thing which we most honour and revere, to the glory of God and the Deity of his only begotten Son our Redeemer, how can they profess to be wholly ignorant, “why it should of late have grown “into a fashion among the Clergy to de-
“claim against the Unitarians?” Has it not, to use their own words, of late “grown “into a fashion” among the Unitarians, to put themselves forward in reviling those sacred truths, to the defence of which the Clergy have solemnly dedicated themselves? They have not, say they, “attacked the “Ecclesiastical Establishment, the reve-
“nues of the Church, or the characters of “the Clergy.” Ought these considerations to have closed our lips? Ought we to have been awake to our temporal interests, and

neglectful of the foundation on which rest all our hopes for evermore? Though the foundation of God's word standeth sure, yet the weak brother must be guarded, lest he be made to slip from his footing upon that foundation. This is the consideration which has called forth animadversion and rebuke upon their specious fallacies. We are placed in our station to watch for those committed to us, "as they that must give an account." We are commanded to be ever ready to "give a reason for the hope that is in us." May God grant, that such reason be never wanting to the defenders of Christianity; and may he in his mercy extend to all, to believers and to unbelievers, in his good time, the grace of our Redeemer; that all may receive and obey, with true humility and entire obedience, the doctrines of Salvation.

THE END.

SERMON,

BEING

THE CONCLUSION OF A COURSE,

PREACHED

DURING LENT, 1819,

IN

ST. MARGARET'S CHAPEL, BATH.

BY THE

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A SERMON,

8c.

“IF YE KNOW THESE THINGS, HAPPY ARE YE IF YE
DO THEM.”

JOHN XIII. 17.

SUCH is the condition annexed to every precept of righteousness ; such are the terms, according to which the salutary admonitions which the Gospel of our Saviour so abundantly supplies, will be counted to us either for causes of salvation or condemnation. When can these terms and conditions be more properly recalled to our recollection than at the conclusion of the season of fasting and humiliation ? When can it be expected that they should produce more salutary and permanent impressions, than at the close of reflections on that subject which has occupied our attention weekly in this place, Repentance ? Gratifying, highly gratifying it is,

to see that a subject which affords so little to captivate the ear or allure the curiosity, should yet have engaged the continued and still increasing attention which has been paid to it ; that the attempt, however imperfect, to declare the whole counsel of God on this point, so far as the opportunity allowed, should have been received not only with patience, but with every indication of earnest desire for such admonition.

Well and fairly may the Christian generally rejoice in such appearance of religious feeling ; and with reasonable hope of acceptation may each one offer up his prayer, that it might please the Almighty to make his own heart fertile in those good fruits which ought to spring from such preparation, and which may well be expected to spring from it, if it have been thoroughly and sincerely made. But there is the question which we are bound to try in our own heart ; and for the thorough trial of which a review is necessary of the matters which have now been laid before us, and an examination of the impression which they have made, and as we may hope permanently made, on our conscience.— With some persons, at least, it may not be unreasonable to hope that such has been the case ; though the general course of dissipation has continued without any respect to the exercises of religion appointed for this season, though every

species of vanity, and indulgence, and luxury, has continued to reign in public without control.

“To day,” says the psalmist, “if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”* Is it then that we refuse to hear God’s voice, or to what is this hardening of the heart to be attributed?—For never let it be forgotten that perseverance in any practice, after we have been apprized of its iniquity, constitutes this offence; and the refusal to hear does not afford any extenuation on the ground that it may not perhaps have led to any positive and decided act of iniquity.

If courses of idleness are pursued, they who follow them quickly become hardened in neglect; they become insensible of the sin which they commit in wasting so much of the precious time committed to their charge; and indifferent to the consequences, because they have ceased to make any account of them. The act of transgression can seldom be committed, whatever be its nature, without awakening the attention in some degree to that which we are doing. The sin of neglect is silent, and too often unheeded. The former, the positive commission of offence, may often startle him who is not confirmed in practices of vice, and induce him to reflect, and withdraw his foot from the paths in which he is about to tread. The latter, the neglect of what

* Psalm xcvi.—7, 8

ought to have been done, creeps silently and unobserved upon us. It gives no violent shock to any of our feelings. It falls in with the love of ease, and with that disposition to indolence, which are defects so natural in the characters of most persons ; with that propensity to seek what passion and inclination desire, rather than what duty approves, which constitutes a temptation so powerful in all, and so fatal to too many.

But let it not be forgotten, that whatever excuses may be urged for casual and occasional omissions ; yet that continued neglect of any duty which we ought to have performed, or continued neglect to consider whether we ought to have performed that which we frequently do perform, amount to nothing less than hardening ourselves in careless indifference at least, if not in actual iniquity.

And much of the same nature in effect is the delay of amendment ; much of the same nature as to its making us eventually chargeable with the sin of omission, though more deceitful, and therefore more dangerous, in appearance. For why should not the same cause which now operates as an excuse for neglect of duty, continue to operate ? It is, in the first instance, inclination which makes us seek for such excuses. And are we so ignorant of our own nature, as not to be aware that every instance in which we give way to such inclination

against our better judgment, or without consulting it, from fear of finding it against that which we desire to do ; every such instance weakens our power of resistance, if ever afterward we should collect resolution enough to make the attempt ?

Whoever has been at all accustomed to examine his own heart, and to review his actions and the motives which led to them, will stand convicted by his own conscience in many instances, with regard to this matter. Whoever has not acquired the habit of regular and frequent self-examination, severely and accurately made, may escape, indeed, some reproaches of conscience, but is hardening himself in the sins of omission, if not in those of a more positive nature. And be it remembered that the distinctions which mankind set up as to the comparative criminality of offences, are very commonly without foundation, except in their own ideas formed out of their own habits. Thus it is that sins of neglect have been accounted as less offensive, for no better reason than because neglect is the common vice of all, and all are interested in seeking some appearance of extenuation for it.

But the Lord judgeth not as man judgeth, "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart ;" in that point, therefore, must the reformation begin, and all, without exception, stand in need of it, for their posi-

tive transgressions of the law of righteousness, or for their neglect to do the deeds of righteousness; if not for both.

Repentance is never shut out from those who sincerely desire to repent ; but we may be cut off, we know not how soon, from the power to attempt it. And have we tried ourselves whether the intention to repent be really sincere in ourselves? Have we found on former occasions, that when convicted of fault or omission by our own conscience, we have been truly earnest to reform that which was amiss, without waiting for the example of the world to lead in a way wherein it never will lead ; and without taking shelter for our own misdoings under the prevailing follies, and even vices, of others? Our own example to others is a concern of very weighty moment to every one of us ; but the example of others is no sort of justification to the conduct which may be produced by its influence, upon ourselves. Have we found ourselves willing to *take* example from the virtuous, and earnest to *set* example of that which is good before others? Or have we rather followed in the stream of popular practice, satisfied with the standard of worldly behaviour, and without reflecting how utterly void of excuse are they who “follow a multitude to do evil?” The world, in the general acceptation of the term, the body of society, and especially of more refined

society, requires to be awakened to exertion ; to be convinced that not only patient-hearing of the word of God, but also diligent practice of the precepts which it inculcates, is essentially necessary to salvation ; that it is not enough to read the ordinances of our duty, nor patiently to endure reproof for the neglect of those ordinances in passed time ; but that unless our practice prove the effectual impression made on our consciences, the precepts which we have received will only testify against us to condemnation.

Most gladly do I bear witness to the attention which has been paid to an attempt (however weakly made) to impress on our own minds the importance of the great duty of repentance, at this season set apart for humiliation and contrition. To hear the word is the first thing ; and patience under rebuke is essentially necessary to every one, who thinks to learn the righteousness of God, and how he may best shew it forth in the conduct of his own life. These give opportunity for amendment ; they open the mind to suggestions which may by God's grace make an impression there, and convince us of that which is the first thing to be known, that we have yet much to do in order to make good our title as faithful and true disciples of our blessed Lord. But they do not amount to effectual amendment in themselves ; they are, as it were, but the

threshold and entrance to it. "Blessed," said our Saviour, "are they that hear the things which ye hear." Was it on account of their gratification at the time, that such hearing was accounted for blessedness?—Was it because they were convinced of the truth of those divine lessons, and gave their bare approbation and assent to them? No—The doctrines of the Gospel never evaporate in mere speculative righteousness; they are never satisfied by mere empty applause, nor is any reward ascribed to those who confer that and no more; but the teaching of Christ himself is this—"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

There is a fashion in every thing at this day, and even in religion itself there is a fashion. It is followed in outward appearance by too many, merely because others shew the same observance to it; and not from any motive springing purely from the sense of duty, or from conviction of its excellence and high importance. In such a case the example which has now been shewn of attention to this service, may, it is to be hoped, work salutary effects, and extend its influence not only to the exterior, but to the spiritual and essential part of religion. For as evil communications corrupt good manners, so will the society of those who are engaged in a good practice tend to recommend the adoption of such practices to others.

But let not our concern for that which we acknowledge to be our duty stop here. Let it not rest on the performance of one act of service, without going on to a consistent conduct in others also; nor let us rest satisfied with the outward shew of good example, while no pains have been taken really to purify the thoughts and intentions of our hearts, and in every thing to make our behaviour consistent with such shew of outward reverence. Let it be examined how much of the attention, shewn in this instance, has sprung from curiosity; how much from influence of others; and how much from a real desire to be awakened to the sense of our need of reformation. Our future behaviour will prove what has probably been the motive with each individual. For if the heart has really been desirous of repentance, there will not appear that inconsistency in your conduct, which marks the state of one halting between two opinions.

And surely it is not harsh nor unreasonable to entertain some idea that pure religion has not been the only principle of action with all, when so much has constantly shewn itself which was inconsistent with the profession of really religious zeal. When those who came to hear the duties of a season of mortification and penitence inculcated in the morning, mixed nevertheless in all the height of gaiety, which the following evening's dissipation could afford;—when those who had

listened to the warnings which the word of God supplies, against remission of duties, and neglect of daily preparation for our account with our Almighty Judge, and against the delay of repentance and reformation ; when they, as if to banish such thoughts, as if studiously to disperse all recollections which might have arisen from them, plunged again as deeply as ever into the tide of worldly gratification, and luxurious idleness, so soon as the opportunity was offered—what can be thought of their sincerity ? Or what of the firmness of their resolution, under the convictions with which they seemed to have been impressed ? Can it be imagined, that they could have supposed the morning's attention to be set off as an equivalent against the evening's neglect ?—Can it be, that they could conceive that the duty performed, would stand as a sufficient counterpoise against the duty neglected ? Consistency is necessary to give respectability to our behaviour among men, and it is not less necessary to make our acts of righteous observance, valuable in the sight of God. If a season is observed at all as conducive to repentance, and as especially set apart for the promotion of that great and most important work, it ought to be observed throughout ; and such observance, if it were hearty and sincere, would put a stop, for the time, to those scenes of festivity, which in this city run higher, at this season, than in any other.

The exercises of religion, which are peculiarly appropriate to the season, would then produce their proper effect. The impressions which ought to be kept up; and which must be kept up if any good effect is to be produced by them, would not then be dissipated by the plans of amusement which was immediately to follow. The mind would have time to acquire somewhat of a habit of consideration, and religious reflection; and would come forth from such exercise, fortified against the temptations, which a state of society necessarily produces for the probation of every one. That season has now indeed nearly passed away: how it has been spent, and what use has been made of it, is matter for the reflections of every individual. But though in the time particularly set apart for penitence, it be more especially becoming our profession to pay peculiar attention to it; yet be it remembered, that it is a duty which never can be suspended.

Let us not imagine, because a special time of fasting and humiliation was appointed by the primitive Church, and our own, that therefore we are to indulge in every sort of revelry and luxury when that time shall have ceased. Were it observed, as it used in better days to be, such could not be the case, nor would such inference then be drawn. How much less can the very imperfect practice of modern times among us,

afford any pretence for the justification of particular indulgence afterwards.

If we have not yet begun to turn our minds to reflection on our own ways, and to real and thorough amendment of them, it is time that we should immediately now begin. Many are the opportunities besides such seasons as this, which may serve to recal the thoughts from worldly vanities, and to make us better acquainted with our own deficiencies. Every misfortune, whether great or small, ministers such opportunities in a greater or less degree. Ill success in our undertakings; sickness of ourselves, or others for whom we are interested as for ourselves; misfortunes of every sort; all tend to awaken the thoughts to the serious reflection, without which there may be a profession of repentance, but without which it is little likely to be taken up in sincerity and truth. The difficulty always is to make us thoroughly sensible how much we individually stand in need of it: to convince us that general confessions of sin are not the methods which will lead us to know our own iniquities, and that general professions of repentance will never lead us to the amendment of them.

“ Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* That love of the

* 2 John ii. 15.

world, however, it is, which proves the constant bar to our amendment; which all can perceive in their neighbours, but none will acknowledge in themselves. That love it is, which makes men linger on, and still cling to habits of which they well know that the end is not salvation. That love of the present it is, which prevents them from attending to the danger of deferring amendment beyond the present hour; and makes them forget, that if they know these things, happy are they only if they do them.

May God in his mercy grant that these reflections be not merely temporary, but fixed and ingrafted in our hearts. To him alone it is known, which of us who have heard these things, will at the return of this season in the next year be found among us, to shew the fruits which they have borne in consequence of them. The rest will then have passed beyond the probation of this uncertain state, beyond its trials of joy or of sorrow: beyond the allurements of its dissipation, and the irritation of its afflictions. Think every one for himself—let me beseech you to think, how your own particular account stands prepared should that lot fall on you. Try your hearts; how much observance has been given to religion, and to duty, because it is duty before God; and how much attention has been paid to it, for decency's sake, before man, or from any other worldly mo-

tive ; where the practices of an idle and dissipated society have left scope even for that service. We are standing, both young and old alike, on the brink of eternity ; and examples are daily occurring to warn us how suddenly we may be snatched away to abide the judgment.--No age, no condition, is exempt from responsibility ; nor secure, for one single moment, against the call which may instantly come, to render up the account which must one day be given. May God in his mercy, grant that we, when he cometh, may be found so watching ; that this present season may be to us a beginning of serious reflection upon our past state here, and our future lot for evermore ; and may he so teach us to number our days, aye every one of them, that we may apply our hearts immediately from this time forth, and constantly and habitually, to his heavenly wisdom.



A SERMON

ON

FEMALE CHARACTER:

PREACHED ON OCCASION OF

Her late Majesty's Funeral,

AT

THE CHAPEL IN MARGARET'S-COURT, BATH.

BY THE

REV. C. A. MOYSEY, D. D.

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ABBAY CHURCH-YARD, BATH.

SERMON,

&c.

I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, SAYING UNTO ME, WRITE, BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHO DIE IN THE LORD FROM HENCEFORTH. YEA, SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS; AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM.—14 *Rev. V. 13.*

THESE are the words which in that sublime and magnificent prophecy of St. John, describe the salvation of the faithful out of the fiery trial, which is there announced as the furnace in which they were to be proved and purified. It follows immediately upon the denunciation of vengeance and unspeakable punishment on those who should have received the mark of the beast, the badge of Satan, the symbol of adherence to that Babylon, which has commonly been understood as designating the Church of Rome with its idolatries and blasphemous worship. It follows upon

the annunciation of the overthrow of that Babylon, of that idolatrous power ; and contains a blessing, emphatically pronounced on those who *had* died under its persecutions, or who *should* die free from its iniquities. May God, in his mercy, grant to all of us, that we may be partakers in that blessing ; and though appearances may threaten the revival of that sinful and pernicious dominion, yet we may hope that Divine vengeance will not visit our sins, by restoring strength to that perishing, but still dangerous apostacy : and we have all reason to make our prayer against the revival of that spiritual Babylon : to pray, “ Now that it lieth, let it rise up no more.”

Much might be the benefit derived in these days from a full consideration of this the original sense of our present text, considered in connection with the prophecy to which it belongs. But it is hardly a fit subject for discussion before a mixed congregation. It requires judgement and much learning, and leisure to apply them both to the thorough examination of the whole book, if we would hope to penetrate into the particular difficulties which

there abound. And even with all those advantages, our proficiency would probably be but small. For God never gave the word of prophecy, to enable us before hand to discern what was to come to pass, and error is the certain consequence of all attempts at so doing. This has been exemplified most abundantly, in the attempts which have been so repeatedly made of late years ; attempts which have not stopped at their proper point, the endeavour to call the attention of mankind to those evidences of Divine foresight, which are afforded by the accomplishment of predictions which *have* been fulfilled ; an accomplishment to which the attention of unthinking persons is not directed as it ought to be ; but which seeks to withdraw the veil spread by Almighty Providence over the events of futurity. Nor have those who make such attempts recollected the key which our blessed Saviour has given, to shew the *period* at which the explanation of prophecies may be expected, and the *object* which the knowledge of such explanation is intended to answer. “ Now I have told you before it come to pass

that when it is come to pass ye may believe." The *period* when the prophecy shall be understood is, when it is come to pass: till that time it stands as a trial of our faith. The *object* which the understanding of it is designed to answer is, that ye may believe; that we may acknowledge the proof of Almighty knowledge and power, in Him who first announced, and afterwards brought it to pass.

I shall therefore forbear to enter farther into the discussion of this text, as a part of the revelation of things to come; but rather chuse to turn to an application of it with which all are well acquainted; to an application of it, as it is found in the service of our Church, for the Burial of the Dead. And awful indeed is its sound on that occasion. Awfully does it announce to us the blessing of the dead, who have departed, after a life spent in the faith and fear of God, and have gone to rest from all their labours. It announces that their works follow them.

But not to them alone is the part of the divine word to be applied. Not only to

those who *rest* from their labours, because they have lived *to* the Lord and died *in* the Lord, is it allotted that their works shall follow, and be imputed to them in the account of the last great day: but to the sinner also, to the hardened and profligate, to the worldly and dishonest, to the dissolute and the careless, the same account is appointed. All, without respect of persons, high and low, rich and poor, young and old, have the same lot ordained for them, that their works shall follow them, and that for those works they shall abide the judgement of Almighty God. Let us reflect while we hear these solemn words, and let the occasion, now present to the mind of every one, give to such reflections their due effect.

When the head which has borne a crown is layed low even with the dust; when the body which shared the honours of a throne is about to be consigned to the darkness of the grave, the circumstances of the case command attention: the greatness of her who has been visited by the hand of death, attracts all eyes to the consideration of that character, which lives,

and shall live, for public example. It is natural, and it is proper then, when our Queen has departed hence to rest from her labours, to call to mind the works which follow her; to recollect what they were, and how they may best be applied to our own example and individual improvement.

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”—The Dead! Need we now again to be reminded what are the reflections which Death ought to excite? Need we again to hear of the certainty of its visitation; when but a year has passed over our heads since public affliction bore testimony to the truth of all this? When the stroke of untimely death blasted our nation’s hopes, and filled every heart with sad and solemn thoughts? The life for which we *now* mourn has not *thus* been broken off. It ran its full course, and ripe in years passed hence at the call of God, to give account for the things which have been done in the body, whether they be good or evil.

“Blessed are the dead, *who die in the Lord.*” It is to that character that the

blessing is attached, and well in this instance may it be so attached, notwithstanding human infirmities, which it is too much the manner of some in our days to magnify, and thrust upon the public notice, That irreverend treatment of those whom God has set over us, that undutiful and indecent manner of reviling for minor failings, those to whom the Lord hath allotted respect and honour, is too much the fault, the vice, of our day. It is a part of that fruit which the execrable rebellion of a neighbouring country has left behind it: a revolution which though it could not endure the test of time and experience, and has therefore given way to that order and regular authority which it at first violently overthrew; has yet left seeds of bitterness, scattered not only over THAT land, but all around. It has left the indecent habit of reviling those who are entitled to our respectful submission; the habit of resisting, according to our caprice, any established rule, whose operations become inconvenient to us individually; the habit of forgetting our reverence due to the Lord our God, and to his ordinances, whether civil or religious. What is the effect of such

habits, the disturbances, the atrocities, the treasons of these times have shewn. And if they whose rank and means of knowledge ought to have given them more wisdom, worldly at least, if not religious; if *they* will not cease to set the example of insubordination, by "speaking evil of dignities" (as says the Apostle,) the consequences must in justice, and will in natural course, recoil upon their own heads.

Can we not then, instead of looking for the faults, turn to the excellencies of her whose high station set her for an example to this land? A moment's consideration of the works which follow her, will shew how highly this nation is indebted to her, for an example whose benefit has been incalculable; and of which, doubtless, she does not now lose the reward. She rests from her labours, and great and trying have those labours been. She has endured the labour of times of unexampled trouble and danger. She has endured the sore visitation of him whose excellency encouraged her to all that is good, whose

religious firmness supported her (under God) through all that is evil. She has endured in the sore affliction of him her Royal consort, the bitterest, perhaps, of all visitations. Nor has she been untried by other family afflictions, to which all are made subject. She rests now from those labours, which, if well and patiently endured, work to her acceptance with her and our Redeemer. She "rests from her labours, and her works do follow her."

What is the lesson which those works have taught? In private and in public they have been of great, of infinite value. As a wife and a mother in private life, as a Queen in public, the lesson of her example has been most edifying, and long may it live in the hearts of all. We mourn for her as for a mother. As a mother's let her past life be regarded, let the frailties inseparable from mortality be privately observed as a warning to the individual who may know them; the virtues, the religious character which mortality does not necessarily inherit, be remembered ever-

more, for edification to the public, as well as to the individual. And then shall we find real cause for mourning. Then shall we deplore sincerely, and from the heart, her who has kept up the standard of female character in this country, when profligacy and immodesty prevailed; and were openly countenanced in every other court of Europe: who steadily set her face against any, from the highest rank to the lowest, who were known to have departed from that modesty which is the brightest ornament of the female character.

Her attention to *all* the duties of religion was also exemplary. To charity she opened wide her hand without ostentation: But many of those duties were performed in private, where the example could not produce the same excellent effects on the public mind. The countenance which she gave to decency of character was open and public, and therefore was it of the highest public benefit.

To what might not the freedom and inconsiderate licence of modern manners;

(to call it by the gentlest name)—to what might it not have grown; but for the steady adherence of her who is now taken from this land, to her system of openly discouraging them, by refusing access to her presence to all on whom the imputation notoriously rested? If we are not aware of the immense advantage which the public has reaped from such strictness of decorum, in an age when levity and dissipation are still at their height, when profligacy and shameless disregard to decency have been seen in too many instances; we know not, and do not deserve the advantages we have enjoyed. Is there any one who can be insensible of the influence which female character produces on the whole cast and complexion of society; and can we be contented that such influence be perverted, to aid the cause of irreligion rather than of Christian virtue? From the highest rank to the lowest, the force of example extends; in some measure at least, it encourages and persuades to obedience and to duties of religion; though human depravity is constantly acting in opposition to *good* influence; constantly urging to obey the flesh

in all the lusts thereof. But if the example tend to sin, how readily is the shadow of sanction which it seems to hold out embraced ! How powerfully does it co-operate with our natural propensity to evil, when those above us shew in themselves the pattern of iniquity, or when they uphold or encourage vice by giving the support of their countenance to it in others.

Surely then to her memory, in whom such iniquity was denied by example, and discountenanced by her authority ; the praise, the thanks, the gratitude of every advocate of well-doing are most justly due. Without that modesty and decency of reputation which it was her constant practice to require, what should have preserved the female character in this country, from falling to the same low standard to which we have seen it sunk in too many places on the continent of Europe ? What though that standard relate chiefly to the *outward* appearance ? Yet is outward appearance all over which an *earthly* being can exercise authority ; and little can they have known of human nature, who are not aware that so soon as the *outward* barriers

of decent exterior and visible deportment are disregarded and thrown down, the purity of the heart and mind are speedily borne away, by the torrent of dissipation and profligate example which pour in on every side.

And fearfully does that tide of vice and immorality threaten now to set upon us, when such numbers of those whose influence and example greatly tend to establish the character of the times in which we live, have been exposed to all the corruption of licentious courts abroad ; to all the seducing influence of disregard for religion and for God, masked under the ensnaring appearance of liberality, and cheerfulness, and amusement. In her, to whose living example we now can look for it no more, have we the model, by which to frame our conduct in discouraging the growing profligacy of the age ; in resisting that corruption of the good manners which it has pleased God hitherto to preserve in the female character in this nation beyond those around us ; a corruption which the evil communications to which so many of our younger females have lately been

exposed, makes the considerate mind to regard with especial apprehension and dread.

Let it then be shewn, that the Christian principles of this favoured nation are not to be carried away by the force of foreign licentiousness, and practical infidelity. Let *each one* now do *her* best individually to keep up that standard of modesty and decency of character, which was so well maintained by her who is now, as we trust, gone to receive the blessing of those "who die in the Lord."

Will all who now hear me so die? Will all whose works do follow them, find *rest* from their labours? On them alone who die in the Lord, is the blessing of the Apostle pronounced. Not on those who die in worldly pursuits and pleasures, in fashionable follies and dissipation, in heedlessness and disregard for real practical Christianity. To die in the Lord, is to die in humble resignation to his will, *after having lived* in faithful obedience to his ordinances; in the mortification and habitual restraint of fleshly appetites, and passions; in the denial and rejection of worldly va-

nities ; in the daily improvement of our faith in our blessed Redeemer, and in the exercise of those Christian works to which such faith points out the way, and by which faith is made perfect.

On this depends the *rest* from our labours, and for labours must every mortal be prepared, Wretched, indeed, will their state be, who pass from those of this mortal life, to the endless labours, the endless pains and anguish, which must follow the departure of the unprepared and unrepentant.

The pains, the bodily anguish with which the righteous are chastened, may well be endured, for the sake of the hope which is set before them ; the hope full of immortality. But shall the gay and thoughtless, shall the sensual and intemperate, shall the scorner and irreligious rejoice in the same hope ? When *they* draw near to the grave, who have made all their reliance on the world, and bestowed all their care to please the world, and to enjoy their own gratifications and follies : When they find themselves approaching to the awful change,

from earthly to immortal existence ; will *their* hope be reasonable, “ well grounded, and full of joy ? ” Will *their* trust be that of *faithful* servants, looking through Christ, to a blessed immortality ? Let us not forget, that not to her alone, our Queen, whose loss this nation well may mourn ; not to her alone is it appointed that her works do follow her ; but that there is no one person living, however young and healthy, however thoughtless and fearless now, who must not at any hour (God alone knows when) appear at his awful judgement seat, to give account for the things done in this mortal body, whether they be good or evil.

The righteous perish, and none “ layeth it to heart.” The common observer is not moved by the *ordinary* instances of mortality daily before his eyes ; nor does it often happen that the person on whom the stroke of death has fallen, is one whose character has been sufficiently conspicuous to afford the lesson of example to any, except friends and relations. But the mother of a whole nation passes not *into* life, nor *out* of it, thus, ~~not~~ without important

consequences. She lived an example of conjugal affection; of Christian charity (for her charities, though not public, were great and bountiful,) and of that decency, and attention to the duties of religion, and to the maintenance of female modesty, which she with our afflicted King, perhaps alone, upheld among the courts of Europe. She *lived* to practise and to teach those virtues. * “ Being *dead*, she *yet* speaketh ;” and let not that voice be uttered in vain.

God has abundantly shewn forth his mercies towards us; and well may we trust in him that he will yet raise up to us, at his good time, another model of female virtue, to stem the current of dissipation, and support the credit of modesty. But great as is the influence of such high example, and invaluable as is the maintenance which it gives to religion and the practise of Christian virtue; yet be it remembered, that even without it, the foundation of God standeth sure, and every Christian is called to build up a *life of righteousness upon* that foundation. The

example set before us is a farther aid. We have not only read the precept, but seen the possibility of the practice. If such example be by God's grace continued to us, (and why should it not?) still the individual exertions of every private person are required to co-operate, and bring it to its full effect. If, from whatever cause, the same *high* example should not be found, the greater then is the obligation to individual example which lies on every private person.

Such is the conduct which Christians are bound in duty, in charity to man, and in obedience to God, to exhibit evermore. "Such is the conduct which is honest, which is just, which is pure, which is lovely, which is of good report." If then there be amongst us "any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things," and act upon that righteous reflection.



LECTURES

ON

ST. PAUL'S

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS,

PREACHED ON THE

WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS IN LENT,

IN

THE PARISH CHURCH, AND IN ST. MARGARET'S CHAPEL,

IN WALCOT.

BY THE

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Archdeacon of Bath, and Rector of Walcot.

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TO THE PARISHIONERS OF WALCOT,

THESE LECTURES

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

ARE INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL AND AFFECTIONATE

FRIEND AND PASTOR,

CHARLES ABEL MOYSEY.

LECTURE I.

2 PETER iii. 16.

IN WHICH ARE SOME THINGS HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD
WHICH THEY THAT ARE UNLEARNED AND UNSTABLE
WREST, AS (THEY DO) ALSO THE OTHER SCRIPTURES
UNTO THEIR OWN DESTRUCTION.

IT has been our custom, as you well know, my brethren, at this season of the year officially appointed for devotional exercise take into consideration in a more especial manner, some of the features of the modern christian character among us. Or sometimes as for the two or three seasons of Lent passed, I have endeavoured to turn to the eminent example of the primitive days, and draw by comparison from thence that reproof and correction, and instruction in righteousness, of which it has seemed to me that we at this time stand most in need.

The labours of St. Paul, his journeyings, and perils, and sufferings, his zeal for God, and his charity for man; his boldness in the cause of truth, and with all that, his humility; his desire also, insomuch as was consistent with the preaching of the truth, to avoid offence: these have been set, so far as I have been able to do it, before you, and impressed upon you. Example is the plainest form in which instruction can be conveyed, and if we will not take it when thus placed before us, grievous indeed will be the account, that must be rendered up in the last day, for having received the grace of God, in vain.

But his example, and his precept, ought ever to go hand in hand. Now there is not perhaps in the whole volume of the New Testament, one book to be found, in which the precept has been more frequently perverted through misunderstanding, than his epistle to the Romans. His personal conduct will indeed, it is true, often furnish an excellent commentary on the doctrines which he therein imparts to his

converts. His writings themselves will, moreover, frequently explain the difficulties which therein are found—but still they remain a stumbling-block to many.

Ask yourselves, my brethren, fairly and honestly, how often and how diligently, are care and attention applied, to the searching out of the difficulties which appear, on the face of all the epistles of St. Paul, more or less: but of this to the Romans more especially? Every one has heard in the service of the church, different portions of that epistle; and most persons, as I should hope, have given at least, some attention to it at home.

But as to that part which is heard in the public service; it is necessarily so short, as to be on very many occasions separated from other matters, though they be connected with it, and though upon them it must depend in these instances, principally, for explanation. And as for the private studies of many, even seriously minded and well disposed christians, in their own secret chamber; every one knows

how little able are very many of them, to look for help into the many treasures of sacred learning; though they may be found, and searched with advantage, by the diligent and competently learned.

And besides them does not another class exist, who read as a matter of formal daily duty, but without much pains taken to understand? Are there not those to be found, who prescribe to themselves the reading of a portion in the word of God, as a regular task; but pass on indifferently, whether they have, or have not, perceived the sense of it? And do they not forget how nearly the same in spirit theirs is, with the ritual, formal service of those, who present themselves in the house of God to hear, or it may be, to repeat their part, in forms of devotion, of the import of which they scarcely think at all? Yet all know how vain is such sort of worship: surely then a very little consideration must make them perceive, that equally vain, equally fruitless, must be the reading of scripture; when difficulties are

hurried over, and that information which such passages might convey, is wilfully cast aside.

It is in the hope of giving to the young, and to those who have not the means and opportunities for close enquiry, some aid ; as well as to them who have not hitherto felt the disposition, though they may now be awakened to a desire, fully to understand the word of God ; that I now propose to attempt the examination of this very important, and by no means easy book, the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. And I trust, by God's grace, that my diligent endeavours, weak and very imperfect as they must needs be, may be enabled to benefit some among those, who draw near in sincerity, to the study of that very instructive portion of the revealed word.

But before we enter upon the examination of the epistle itself, it may be well to make a few remarks on the style, and particular manner, of St. Paul's writing ; for out of that, much of the difficulty which his epistle presents, will be found to arise.

St. Paul may be considered as the most copious writer of any, whom the volume of the New Testament presents to us. The same zeal, the same earnestness and vigour, which we have remarked in all the course of his conduct, displays itself also in his writing. And there was nothing which should make him afraid to exercise, and exhibit, those qualities. He was not one who feared to engage himself in any matter which opponents might present, in the way of objection to his reasoning, or of contradiction to his declarations. Well versed in the Greek philosophers and poets, he evidently was. Thoroughly instructed, by especial revelation also in the doctrines of the faith which he taught, he feared no want of information on that essential point. Thoroughly informed by the same supernatural means, in the history of our Blessed Saviour's life, and teaching, which he alone among the Apostles had not personally witnessed; he felt himself to be, as he said,* "not a whit behind the very

* 2 Cor. xi. 5. and xii. 11.

chiefest of them.” And when the discussion was provoked by Jews, or by those who sought still to press the rites of the law of Moses on the christian believer; who so well informed in the sacred scriptures, and in the traditions of the Pharisees themselves, as St. Paul? He had been born a Jew; bred a Pharisee; and educated at the feet of Gamaliel, the great rabbinical teacher of his day. He was therefore, as well he might be, a fearless and a powerful advocate for christianity, alike to learned and unlearned; alike to Jew and Gentile.

Let his pains however, taken during his retirement of two years in Arabia, in order thoroughly to learn from the Holy Spirit the doctrines which he was to teach,* be a pattern to us, of industry and application. Let them prompt us *thoroughly* to learn, and not to issue crude and hasty conceptions of our own, upon any idea of knowledge suddenly and summarily acquired.

* Gal. i. 12.

St. Paul was called by mirale. He testified at once, immediately, and boldly, in Damascus, his own newly adopted faith in christianity. But he presumed not to preach it, untill he had been much more throughly instructed. He was qualified by all the learning of his day, both Jewish and Heathen; yet he did not suffer conceit of himself to arise on that account. He employed all the means of each sort, which could be made to apply to the conversion of the Jews and Gentiles; and yet with all his gifts, he never forgot the necessity for humility.

For though he was well stored with learning, and knew its value; though he was able to apply it, when and where it would be most serviceable; yet we find no shew of it in his epistles—rather there might appear something like a total disregard of form and order in argument, to those who read him but hastily. But it will be to them alone; for he is not negligent. He sacrifices method indeed; that is to say, the method which was adopted by

those who studied elegance in their writings. But he wrote not disorderly.

There was a preference, which his mind gave to some matters over others; and for the sake of it he suffered them to break in just where the subject suggested them; and often to interrupt the thread of his discourse. But though the reader may sometimes lose sight of the leading subject, when a long interruption has turned his thoughts another way; yet the Apostle never did so. There was no inattention to his matter in him; and he invariably returns to it, even after the longest digressions.

A style like his, is not mentioned as one which we should do well to imitate. But his language and manner of writing are not the points proposed for our imitation. These peculiarities are mentioned, to help us in attaining to the meaning of St. Paul's epistles, and to make us aware how great is the care, and how close the attention, which must be applied to them, if we would avoid the danger of being

among those “unlearned and unstable,” of whom St. Peter speaks,* who “wrest them to their own destruction.”

The Apostle warns those to whom he writes,† that “his preaching is not with enticing words of man’s wisdom.” He tells them thus,‡ “I came to you not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, &c. (that is, not with worldly skill, and science, and forms of oratory), for I determined not to know any thing among you, (not to rely, or rest my argument on any thing) save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

There was an energy in the Apostle’s mind, which when united with those his avowed system, naturally led him to overlook some of those common rules, which render writings more perspicuous. He was full of the matter which he was earnest to impress upon his hearers; and he poured it forth in that abundance, which introduces subordinate subjects in the way of parenthesis, often at such length,

* 2 Pet. iii. 16.

† 1 Cor. ii. 4.

‡ ib. 1. 2.

that it requires no small attention to observe the point, at which he returns to his original discourse.

Yet he does, as I have already observed, invariably so return. But a careless reader will not perceive this, because such parentheses are sometimes only partially marked, sometimes not at all, in our version. And therefore, to them who read in haste, or without due application of mind, or in short portions only; to them St. Paul's epistles are not a proper subject for their private, unassisted reading. Yet the fault (be it remembered), is in them and not in him. Pains are the price appointed for almost every thing of value. They will not labour for the meat which nourisheth unto *everlasting* life: while for worldly concerns, and even worldly trifles, they *will* take pains willingly; and bestow on them more than sufficient attention. "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, *his* servants ye are whom ye obey."* And we

* Rom. vi. 16.

ourselves must shew, whether we trust most in the revealed word of God, by his Apostles and Prophets; or whether in the rules, and precepts, and maxims, of a thoughtless and ungodly generation.

St. Paul is the most copious, in his epistles, of any among the inspired writers. The inspiration (it must be recollected) which was upon them, was *strictly* according to our Blessed Saviour's promise; and went no farther. He never assured them, that any supernatural guidance should give them the graces of style, or purity of language. But he promised that "He the Spirit of Truth (should) guide them into all truth, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them."*

But in respect of abundance and richness,

* ΕΚΕΙΝΟΣ ΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ, a strong argument, by the way it may be observed, for the personality of the Holy Ghost arises from the masculine pronoun thus used with the neuter substantive, and it is one which cannot easily, if at all, be overborne.

on the one hand, or of dryness of expression, on the other, they were left to themselves and to their own previously acquired manners. And so it was, as to the energy, or quietness of their language. It partook of the natural temperament of the man, and was not governed, as the narration of matter of fact, and the declaration of christian doctrine were, by the Holy Ghost, whose influence was upon the Apostles.

Thus the sudden breaking off from the leading subject, into other matter which was suggested at the moment; in which the chief difficulty of St. Paul's style consists; belonging to the fervent temper of the man. He was eager to press the important point; so soon as it occurred to him, and was utterly regardless of the rules of composition in his epistles.

But he never lost sight, nevertheless, of that on which he was principally discoursing. He always returned to it, though sometimes not till after a considerable interval. It is this circumstance, (and it therefore must be repeatedly impressed), which makes it dangerous

to rest, in *any point of doctrine*, on *short passages of his epistles*. Frequently they cannot be well understood, without taking a great deal together. Frequently, not without utterly overlooking the separation of chapters and verses, which regard for modern convenience at first occasioned. It must be recollected, that neither chapters nor verses, no, nor even stops, were in use at all when the epistles were written. The sense alone marked the period; and the comparison of one part with another, led to the true sense. The stops were inserted afterwards, merely on man's judgment: they have been often changed, and so may they be at any time.

The division into chapters and verses was also made by uninspired man; and merely for convenience sake. But unfortunately it has been done sometimes, to the effect of cutting off the connection of things which belong to each other; and thus the sense, and meaning, has been perplexed by them.

These few remarks, are not intended to

convey a complete description of St. Paul's method, and style in writing. For that, Mac-knight's preliminary essay to his commentary on the epistles, may be consulted with much advantage; as well as various other authors. But these things are stated as necessary with a view to preparing those among my congregation who are not practised in the study of these sacred letters, for the peculiarities of writing, which will occur as we proceed.

The epistle to the Romans was written probably about the year of our Lord fifty-eight; which was the fourth year of the reign of Nero. It was before St. Paul had ever been at Rome; and much a longer time before St. Peter was there. But there were christian converts in considerable numbers in that city, and to them he addressed himself.

Nor could it indeed be otherwise. That great metropolis of the empire, sent forth its inhabitants into all lands, and received into itself strangers from all lands. We read of strangers of Rome on the day of Pentecost, at

Jerusalem;* when the Holy Spirit first fell upon the Apostles. We read before that, of the Centurion at Jerusalem, who was greatly moved, if he was not converted, by the circumstances of our Lord's crucifixion; and who would naturally have spoken of them, and of his feelings and conviction on the occasion, when he should have returned to Rome. And the case of the other Centurion Cornelius,† who actually became a christian, is well known.

That event had occurred in the year of our Lord forty-one; which was full seventeen years before the writing of this epistle. It is well known how widely the christian religion had spread in the dominions of the Romans, during that time; and that it had been embraced by many persons of rank, and of some consequence. It was therefore to be expected, that it should be found in the capital; to which those Centurions would have returned, as well as the strangers of Rome, who had witnessed the

* Acts ii. 10. 41. † Acts. x.

miraculous gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost.

Thither the constant resort of persons of every description from the provinces, would of course bring the opinions which prevailed in the places from whence they came; and that there were many christian converts among them is not to be doubted. The last chapter of this very epistle, is enough to prove it; though it be a matter of some uncertainty whether any one had yet preached the faith in Christ, as an Apostle, in that city, and the presumption is much against any such thing. St. Paul had not yet been there, and much less had St. Peter, who followed and did not precede him.

And this is a point of some importance in these latter days. For the whole claim of spiritual supremacy, which the church of Rome has for twelve hundred years advanced, is grounded on the idea that St. Peter was their *first* bishop, and that to him pre-eminence had been given by our Lord above his fellow Apostles.

Now it is not to our present purpose, to enter on that question of pre-eminence at length. It is sufficient to direct your attention to this one circumstance; viz. that the power of binding and loosing, (whatever the terms might signify), was not exclusively conferred on him; but was, in quite as strong terms given to *all* the Apostles,* just before our Lord's resurrection. As to the special charge then given to St. Peter, three times, to feed the sheep, it was in fact a reproach. It was connected with the threefold enquiry, concerning Peter's love, which had been exposed to doubt, by his threefold denial of his master. It was therefore the evidence required, to prove the love which he professed.

St. Paul not only wrote this epistle in the year fifty-seven or fifty-eight, but was at Rome from the year sixty-one to sixty-three; St. Peter was never there till sixty-four or sixty-five; and then St. Paul was there again also;

* John xx. 23.

and also, together with St. Peter, there suffered martyrdom.

There was, then, manifestly a christian church; that is, a community or fraternity of christians, at Rome, when St. Paul wrote this epistle; and before his first abode in that city. And it is well known as such; for he observes in commendation of them, that their "faith was spoken of throughout the world;"* which expression always means the limits of the Roman empire when it is used in the epistles.

It is clear also, that before the writing of this epistle, there were christians established at Rome. This appears not merely from the probability of the thing, for the reasons already given; but from the various salutations, which occupy the sixteenth chapter. And among them we find mention expressly made, of two, who were converted before St. Paul himself. "Andronicus and Junia" (are his words) "my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who were

* Rom. i. 8.

of note among the Apostles, who were also in Christ before me.”*

Of the state of the christian church, at the time when St. Paul wrote to the Romans, it is necessary that some notice should here be taken; though it must be more particularly mentioned, as the passages shall lead to it, during our course. Christianity was, (as he himself says), “to the Jews, a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks, foolishness.” The one resisted it, because it interfered with their prejudices; the others despised it, because it came not to them clothed in subtilty of argument, nor resting on the wisdom of philosophy.

The Jews relied on their own election, as the chosen people of God. As such, they had been admitted into the first covenant, by the ministration of Moses, and were therefore zealous for *that* law. But it was not that they were studious to uphold the *purity* which it

* Rom. xvi. 7.

taught: their object was to maintain the pre-eminence which it gave to themselves, and to feed their pride with the idea of it. They found, that many of the Apostles' precepts, as well as our Lord's, were against the sense which the Scribes and Pharisees forced upon the law; and still more, against the traditions which they claimed a right to add to that law, under pretence of making it more complete. In this last particular, viz. the setting up of their tradition above the Holy Scriptures, we must remember, that one church among christians, namely that of Rome, has but too closely imitated them. The Apostles, and the council at Jerusalem, had resolved, that the Gentile converts were not to be required to keep the ritual law. And therefore the unbelieving Jews in almost every place, took up the most decided enmity against them, and against the doctrine which they taught.

The very converts also from among the *Jews*, frequently held no small portion of those same prejudices. They diligently sought to impress

this persuasion on the Gentiles who believed, that it was still necessary that they should be circumcised, and keep the law. This was no small hindrance to the progress of the Gospel; and therefore St. Paul in this epistle (as well as in two others, namely, to the Galatians and Hebrews), set himself expressly to overthrow that pernicious idea.

And so he opposes here in like manner, the doctrine of any limitation of God's favour to one chosen people, under the Christian, as it had been limited under the Mosaic dispensation.

We shall find as we proceed, that the favourite arguments both of Jews and Greeks (to use the common expression of the New Testament) are answered and overthrown in this epistle. We shall find it distinctly shown, that salvation was not to be attained by the rites of the law of Moses; nor yet by the wisdom of philosophy, refining on the law of nature. Christianity alone is set forth as the head and the fountain, from whence only man

can attain to the enjoyment of divine favour, and of everlasting life.

Having thus stated whatever may be adviseable to be mentioned, in order to make the object of St. Paul's writing in this epistle, clear; we will in the succeeding lectures, endeavour to explain the difficulties, and to enforce the doctrines, which will occur in our progress through it. The matter before us is of a nature most highly instructive. It abounds as much as any book in the whole inspired volume, in doctrine of sound christianity: and is profitable also for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

May He from whom proceeds all light and all knowledge, give me grace to explain the difficulties; and incline us all to profit duly, by the godly wisdom with which this epistle abounds! So shall we have no cause to lament the pains bestowed, and the attention here applied; but be builded up firmly and steadily, in wisdom and godly knowledge. And so may we, through the grace of God, be able to draw

nearer (to use the same Apostle's expression), "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" till we be found worthy through his infinite mercy shown forth on our diligent, but still frail endeavours, to be received as his faithful servants, into his everlasting kingdom.

LECTURE II.

ROMANS i. 7.

TO ALL THAT BE IN ROME, BELOVED OF GOD, CALLED TO
BE SAINTS; GRACE TO YOU, AND PEACE, FROM GOD
OUR FATHER, AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THE Apostle opens his epistle with a short declaration of his calling as an Apostle, to preach the gospel, and good tidings of salvation. Such, that is to say, good tidings, is the meaning of the Greek word;* and such is that of the Saxon word gospel, by which we have translated it. He then proceeds, in the same style which he was accustomed to use, to bless the converts to whom he writes; "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

* ευαγγελια.

But when I say, that he proceeds in the style which he was accustomed to use, it may perhaps occasion surprise to some, who have always been used to consider this epistle as the first of those which he wrote. So it stands indeed in order of place, but it does not so stand in order of time. The two to the Thesalonians, which are placed the last in our Bibles, were the first written. That which is addressed to the Galatians, was the next, and the two to the Corinthians followed. All of them preceded this to the Romans.

But the order of time was not consulted in arranging this part of the canon of the New Testament. This epistle was addressed to the capital of the world, and therefore had precedence allotted to it: there was in general no necessary connection between the epistles to different places; and therefore it was not deemed necessary to observe the order of the time, in which they were composed and sent.

This epistle was written from Corinth, about

the year of our Lord fifty-eight, which was the fourth of the Emperor Nero. It was addressed, as indeed were all the other epistles, not to unbelievers, but to converts.

And it must be recollected, that in those days the means of multiplying an epistle by printing, did not exist. It was a matter of some difficulty and expense, to obtain copies of writings: and as the heathen, generally speaking, cared but little about the christian doctrine, it had been useless to address to them exhortations, to the hearing, or reading of which, the greater part of them could never have been expected to come.

But the converts to christianity, read or heard those Apostolic letters, in the places wherein they were used to assemble for divine worship. Through those christian converts, it could not but be the case, that some knowledge of the doctrines on which the writer insisted, should find its way among the Gentiles, with whom the Jewish and Gentile converts at Rome and elsewhere had inter-

course. Though addressed to the latter, they were therefore probably written with some view to all.

The Jews at Rome had shown themselves to be a violent, and a turbulent people; and great had been the quarrels among them between the converted and the unconverted in that city. The Roman historian of those times, Suetonius, records the fact of their disturbances; while with the contempt which was usually expressed for that now fallen nation, he does not take the trouble of enquiring any thing precisely, as to the matter in dispute between them. He speaks as if Christ himself had been at that time in Rome, and the leader of a riotous mob; for in mentioning the acts of the emperor Claudius, he says,* “He expelled from Rome the Jews who at the instigation of Chrestus were always making disturbances.”

That expulsion of them is mentioned in the acts of the Apostles:† Aquila, a Jew of Pontus,

* *Judæos impulsore Chresti assidue tumultuantes Româ expulsi.* (Claudius, c. 25).

† xviii. 2.

and his wife Priscilla, were of the number of those who were thus banished from the capital; and they went to Corinth, where they met St. Paul.

It could hardly fail to occur, that they should inform him of the state of things in the place from whence they had come; and of the disputes which ran to so great a height there, upon the question of the ceremonial obligations of the law of Moses; as binding or not binding on Jews converted to christianity. They could not but have mentioned those claims of high supremacy, which the Jews still maintained; and their unwillingness to admit that the Gentiles could become equally acceptable with themselves. And this accounts for the knowledge which the epistle shews of the state of the people at Rome, who interested themselves on either side, in the dispute between the converts and the Jews.

When Aquila and Priscilla first came to Corinth from Rome, their countrymen had been driven out from thence, and dispersed.

But we must remember that this epistle was not written at the time of the expulsion, which was in the year fifty-one, but in the year fifty-seven or fifty-eight; when many of them might very probably have collected there again.

Other matters are touched in this epistle beside the disputes of Jews and Christians; but they may best be mentioned when we come to them in their place.

The epistle begins with a declaration of the Apostle's kind, and christian disposition, toward those to whom he writes.* He declares that he had often intended to visit them,† but had been prevented by other duties, for which the Holy Spirit had called him to other places. He declares that he considers himself their debtor,‡ that is to say, bounden as the Apostle of the *Gentiles*, to exert himself for their spiritual welfare. And it was probably for that reason, that he explained in the course of this epistle, so much of that, which it was very

*i. 9.

† 13 v.

‡ 14 v.

essential for *Gentiles* to learn; though the Jews knew it, or ought to have known it, already, that is to say, so much of God's dealings with man in reference to the life to come.

But here, in the very opening, an instance has occurred, of that peculiarity of style, which belongs, in so many instances, as I observed in my last lecture, to St. Paul's epistles; and which, more perhaps than any one other thing, tends to render them almost unintelligible to the *careless* reader. Here is in the original Greek, a parenthesis implied at the beginning of the second verse; and within that there is another in the middle of the third, and to the end of the fourth verse; for that first parenthesis runs to the conclusion of the sixth verse. In our version, the transposition of a few words has made it all run in one parenthesis; from the beginning of the second to the end of the sixth verse. But that, occurring as it does, at the very opening of the epistle, plainly shews, that the rules of composition were not studied by the Apostles. It shews that he brought in

the matter which occurred, just as his ideas suggested themselves to him; though, as was before observed, without ever losing sight of his main subject. Of that however, the careless readers, or they who dwell on short detached passages, will, in consequence of that very habit of his writing, be *very* likely to lose sight: but they will lose sight also, together with it, of the true import of that which was intended to be expressed. The example has occurred instantly, at the very outset of our undertaking; and therefore I take advantage of it, again to impress upon you all, my brethren, the absolute necessity for caution, and through examination of the *whole*, in all the scriptures, but above all in those epistles of St. Paul.

He begins, as I have observed, with excusing himself for not having preached at Rome. It might indeed have been expected, that the Apostle of the Gentiles should not neglect the principal city of the Gentiles; and therefore he tells them of his desire to have visited them.

He admits that he is their debtor;* that he owed them a visit of instruction, to establish them in the faith; and he professes his readiness to acquit himself of that debt, and to preach the gospel even in Rome itself.†

Yet Rome was in no respect then, a place of safety for a christian teacher. At all times it was filled with heathen idolatries, and ungodly living; but at that time in particular, that scourge of humanity, the tyrant Nero, occupied the imperial throne. But St. Paul shrank back from nothing which duty called him to perform. He did not, as too many among us often do, profess a readiness to do things which they feel that they ought to have done; and declare their sorrow for having been prevented from doing them. But he sought really and heartily for the opportunity; and when it was found, he readily embraced it. He did so on two occasions; the first of which involved him in imprisonment, and the second ended in his martyrdom.

* 14 v.

† 15 v.

And now we enter upon the real subject of the epistle. The argument begins with setting forth the offence of the Gentiles, in having perverted that light of conscience, which the Holy Ghost inspires into the hearts of all men. And this is so set forth for two reasons; first, and most manifestly, to persuade those Gentiles themselves to examine their own ways, and to see the folly and wickedness of them; that so they might return to the true and only God, through Jesus Christ.

But secondly, the Apostle turns his reasoning to the Jews; he convinces *them* of sin, equally with the heathens whom they despised. He proves that they had no claim any longer to a continuance of those exclusive privileges, which the favour of God had, for his wise purposes, so long bestowed upon them alone.

“I am not ashamed (writes he) of the gospel of Christ.” He was under no feeling of shame, which should deter him from teaching, to a proud and haughty city; a city which was the seat of many learned, and of more powerful

men, most of whom held the Jews, and all their doctrine, in utter contempt—he was not ashamed even before them, of publishing the gospel of Christ. Shall we then be ashamed, of avowing that we act upon christian principle? We, who dwell in a land where the faith of our Lord is professed; and all which he inculcated, is, at least so far as words will go, declared to demand the utmost deference, and respect, and obedience? Shall we, because an evil custom may prevail of refusing to submit to the restraints and mortifications, which the christian law imposes on human passions and worldly indulgencies; shall we presume to follow the multitude here; and neglect through fear of their reproach, the duties which we owe to Him, in whom alone we can have sound hope?

Let not that false shame, which too often keeps back the young and the timid from virtuous exertions, be permitted to prevail here in a christian country; where the mockery of those who follow an evil fashion, is the worst which the servant of God, generally speaking,

has to dread. St. Paul was not ashamed of his reproached, and calumniated, and threatened, religion, even amidst pagan Rome. Let us then, like him, not “be afraid of their terror, neither be dismayed; but sanctify the Lord God,” not only in our hearts, but before the eyes, alike of friends and foes. Let us recollect, aye never forget, our Blessed Saviour’s awful saying, “He that shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and of his Father’s, with the holy Angels.”

From hence St. Paul proceeds to declare, that the gospel “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” He declares openly that it is offered to all, though the offer was first made to the Jew. Yet of the gospel be it remembered, that no such thing is said as that it was exclusively to be given, after the manner of the old law, to any one people.

Nor does he teach that the mere profession of belief, is to be accompanied by any favourable exertion of the power of God. He does not say that it is so, to every one that merely declares that he believes; but that it is to him that indeed believeth. To them who proceed from faith to faith; who carry forward their faith, and make it by daily exercise, more and more strong, and more and more fruitful: to them, that is to the just and righteous liver, it is promised that they shall live by faith. But it is expressly said, lest any should build falsely on the assurance of salvation attributed to faith; it is expressly said, that mere speculative faith shall save none. It is distinctly declared, that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all "who hold the truth," if they hold it "in unrighteousness."

What blindness is it then, with this scripture before us, to rest upon names and professions; on baptism on the one hand, or imaginary sensations on the other; without real and practical righteousness! For to Christians by profession

it may be applied full as well, as to the Pagans; whom it is probable the Apostle had chiefly in view, when he thus wrote. Let us remember, my brethren, that having lived under the light of the gospel, as we have lived since our earliest knowledge; if we be convicted by our own conscience, of needing that admonition, which was directed towards those unenlightened Pagans; we have need to fear, lest “the name of our Saviour be blasphemed among the Gentiles,” through our deviation from that law, in which we profess that we are serving, and following him.

4 The Apostle now proceeds to convince the *Gentile* Romans, that they were without excuse, for all those ungodly acts which many among them were accustomed to commit. He admonishes them, that they, and all mankind, had the law of God written on their hearts; whereby conscience gave them warning in all matters, wherein their own evil habits had not extinguished the light of conscience. He rebukes their idolatries, whereby they insulted that

great one God, who though invisible in himself, was ever visible in his works.* The argument which he uses here (it is found in the twentieth verse), is precisely the same as that which he used to the men of Lystria: when speaking of the Almighty, he said, "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; filling our hearts with food and gladness."† So says he here. But to make the passage more clear, I again set back a short parenthesis, to the end of the period. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world, even his eternal power and godhead, are clearly seen; being understood (or to be understood) by the things that are made." Then he proceeds to charge them with all the gross folly of their idolatry, as arising from their conceit of their worldly wisdom, and their neglect to attend to divine revelation.

It is the same motive which is imputed to

* 20 v.

† Acts xiv. 17.

the Jews; it excited in the one people, hard-hearted infidelity; and in the other, the blind worship of superstition, devised according to their own conceits. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* Still does the same cause produce the same effect, and that under the name and outward cover even of christianity.

On this state of man, acting under the influence of his own feelings and impulses, and without controul or guidance, from divine revelation, the Apostle dwells to the end of this first chapter. He argues that the abandoned state of unenlightened man, arose not from any absolute decree of divine displeasure, but from their own evil dispositions; which had led them to turn away from Him; from that Lord, whom originally all had known, and acknowledged.

*Rom. x. 3.

They, says he, “changed the truth of God into a lie, &c.* They themselves (says he) did thus. It was the abuse which they made of their own free will; that blessed gift, through which they had it put in their power to have purchased life immortal. They did not like to retain God in knowledge: and therefore were they abandoned to their own inventions; to a source of evil, than which none can be found, which more assuredly leads towards destruction.

The charge is made on that ground (if we look accurately into the words here used by St. Paul), which establishes this important truth: namely, that the failure of attaining to salvation, whenever men do so fail, is the work of their own evil dispositions and habits; and is not the arbitrary ordinance of God. For there is something very remarkable in the Apostle’s expressions, which is here rendered, “They did not like† to retain God in

* 25 v.

† σκ-εδοκίμασαν

their knowledge:" as there is also in that which answers to it; "God gave them over to a reprobate mind:"* and it is one which I believe, is not unfrequently misunderstood.

Now the words here translated, "like" and "reprobate," (in, "they did not *like* to retain God in their knowledge;" and "God gave them over to a reprobate mind") are, in the original Greek, words which answer to each other. It is as if it were rendered, they did not "prove," or try by a test, literally; and in the other place it is, "an unproved," that is, an unsound mind, or habit of thinking.

The original words have in their primitive signification, reference, the one to the trying of gold by way of ascertaining its purity; and the other to the state of the metal which cannot abide the test. The Apostle is using them, not with any view to that which is commonly called reprobation; which is an absolute decree of condemnation, supposed by mistaken

* αδοκιμονον νεν

persons, to have been passed by the Almighty against particular persons, without fault on their part to call for it. He talks of a reprobate mind, in opposition to a proving, that is, an examining mind. He rebukes the heathen, their learned men, and philosophers; because their own conceit of their abilities and knowledge, had led them to frame a system of idolatry, degrading to God. He reproaches them because their own faculties, if rightly employed, could have perceived that he was at least, something superior to those idols before whom they worshipped, or to the deities represented by them.

For those deities were debased, according to the heathen mythology, by most of the worst crimes which man can commit. The people however took up that senseless worship, even as they found it. They did not prove it, so as to retain the proper idea of a pure and holy God, in their knowledge. And therefore the Almighty gave them over to a reprobate, that is, an unimproving mind. He gave them

over to the consequences which such a deceived and foul representation of the Deity would naturally, and did actually, produce in them; namely, that they “should do those things which are not convenient,” that is to say, not becoming, decent, or proper. It is a sense in which the word “convenient” is often used; as for instance in St. Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient,”* that is, not suited to the condition of Christians.

The first portion of our consideration on this epistle, may well enough stop here: with the censure thus passed on the self-conceited, and yet spiritually-ignorant, of the wise men among the heathen: wise, but only according to the wisdom of this world. We shall presently see how St. Paul leads on the argument, from them to the Jews. But it is more to our purpose to employ the short space which yet remains on this occasion, to considerations

* Eph. v. 4.

which are directly applicable to our own condition, and circumstances.

Look then, my brethren, at the character which he there gives, of those who went astray from God, and followed their own depraved imaginations. Consider also the causes, to which he ascribes that evil doing, namely their neglect, in not duly looking through those, which are called the works of nature, upward to the God of nature. To that he first imputes their error; and then their self-conceited pretensions to a philosophy which should account for every thing, by which that error was fatally confirmed.

And is nothing of the same sort to be found now, among ourselves, in this land? Are there none of those followers of science, falsely so called, who professing themselves to be wise, have become fools? Are there none, who presume to estimate other sciences far before the knowledge of God, and of that which he requires of man? Before our knowledge of our utter inability, as of ourselves; and of the

courses of living which shall render us acceptable to that Mediator, through whom alone our unworthiness can ever hope for acceptance?

Nay, are there none in this land, who presume to doubt, and hesitate, about the things which divine revelation *alone could* possibly make known; namely those which belong to the nature of the Almighty himself; and to the whole of the most merciful, though equally incomprehensible scheme, the scheme of man's redemption?

Too surely such there are. And the vanity of affecting superior wisdom, will constantly betray the self-conceited into that egregious folly, of thinking themselves equal to judge of the hidden things of God, because they know perhaps more than the general mass of their fellows, of matters of earthly speculation, and experimental philosophy.

I say not this to depreciate such studies; but to suggest, that the wisdom of the works ought to lead us to admire, and to bow down

in humble submission, before the great and omnipotent artificer of them. So did they, among the wisest whom the history of our country has left recorded, for the imitation of posterity. So did Bacon and Locke; so did Newton and Boyle. They possessed intellects with which few can cope, if any such there be at all among us; but which never dared to cavil at the wisdom of Almighty God.

Here then, for the present, we must conclude. May He from whom alone cometh wisdom and understanding, give us grace to know that “before honour is humility.” May he teach us to submit ourselves in every thing, to all which tends to his honour and service. Nor can we better conclude, than in the words of a collect* from our excellent book of common prayer. “O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; grant unto thy people, that they

* 4th Sunday after Easter.

may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise : that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, through **Jesus Christ our Lord.**”

The peace of God, &c.

LECTURE III.

ROMANS ii. 2.

THINKEST THOU THIS, O MAN, THAT JUDGEST THOSE
WHICH DO SUCH THINGS, AND DOEST THE SAME THINGS,
THAT THOU SHALT ESCAPE THE JUDGMENT OF
GOD?

THE question before us comes now to the condition of the *Jew*, in St. Paul's discourse; and naturally follows that consideration of the iniquity of the Gentiles, with which we closed the last lecture. He had then urged the obligations, which arose from the light of conscience; that inward evidence which all possessed, till they had for themselves extinguished it. He had urged, say, that obligation, as lying on the Gentile Romans, even without any knowledge of the Revelations of God's will.

To this the Jewish converts would readily enough assent, though their feeling would be very different, when he turned round, as it were, upon themselves, as he does in the opening of the second chapter. Such is the natural feeling of mankind; ready enough to perceive the misdoing, which perverts the ways of others; but seldom ready to acknowledge the same in themselves. Pride, under whatever disguise it may be found, is ever the most effectual, the most fatal hindrance, to the admission of any salutary self-conviction. It can see, and perhaps applaud, that which is good; so it can perceive, and censure the evil, when not shewn in our own instance. But when the actual offender is charged with misconduct, then the heart is hardened against self-knowledge; and the evil is permitted to continue, that it may not be confessed to have been an evil.

The Apostle had, skilfully as it seems, first drawn the attention of the Jews to

the severe censure which he here passes, on the vain, though philosophizing, Gentiles. Suddenly he turns to themselves; and rebukes them, because with greater advantages than the Gentiles, they had fallen into the same vices with them. He shews them that they had no right to condemn others, who did no worse than they had done; though their own means of serving God truly, had been so infinitely superior.

He touches not here, on that which was so odious to the Jews, namely the abrogation of the ritual law, in which they were used to make their boast, because the possession of it had once marked them for the chosen people of God. But he convinces them of sin, even under their own particular privilege. He allows a certain precedence to them; "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," (that is to say, "the Gentile"). But it is a precedence of no avail, to those who had not taken advantage of the opportunity, which the early revelations of the

divine will had given to the Jews. He announces that in his day, eternal life was the reward proposed to the well-doer in general; and condemnation, wrath, and anguish, to every soul of man that doeth evil. The righteous judgment of God is (as he says), to “render unto every man according to his deeds,”* for “there is no respect of persons with God.”†

It may seem to those who but loosely view the matter, that this declaration, “there is no respect of persons with God,” is inconsistent with the especial election, and particular privileges, granted as we all know, to the Jews. But there are two considerations which must be set against that idea. The first is, that speaking of mankind in general, as they came from the Creator’s hand, the case *was* strictly thus. For where do we read of the election of any particular people, till the days of Abraham?

* Rom. ii. 6.

† 11 v.

Cain and his posterity were cast out; but it was for the sinfulness of the father, continued by the children. From Noah came three sons, who stood all equally well as to their prospects; until the wickedness of the one, cast him and his posterity behind that of his two brethren. Then came the dispersion of their children at Babel; and then, if not before, idolatry seems to have found its way among them.

The Patriarchs from Abraham downward, were distinguished by their worship of the one God. Abraham was born only two thousand and four years after the creation; or three hundred and forty-three years subsequent to the deluge. Yet even then he was called out from those among whom he dwelt, in order to preserve the worship of the true God in his own family. And when Jacob afterward returned to his relations, Laban the brother of his mother (who had herself been the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham's nephew), had idols; concerning which

a question arose with Jacob, because Rachael had taken them away with her.

There was therefore no respect of persons in the *original* purposes of God. Man in general turned away from the Lord; but the Lord did not originally turn away, in any degree from him. He chose indeed the posterity of his faithful servants to preserve in him the true worship of his holy name: but that was an act of mercy, not of arbitrary severity. Often as that nation offended, and turned away from him, yet for their forefather's sake, he never cast them off. "Where sin abounded, grace did therefore much more abound;" and that, even under the old dispensation.

But there was a second evidence given, that there is no respect of persons with God. It was announced in plain terms repeatedly; and it shall be verified, awfully verified, before the eyes of all in the last day. Every privilege which was granted to the Jew, was for this life only. But in regard to that

which is to come, still was there no respect of persons with God. If the Jew was better informed; it was expected, and required, that he should act the better; that he should act up to his information.

Thus therefore does St. Paul go on in the beginning of this second chapter, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself: for thou that judgest doest the same things." From thence he naturally comes to the declaration, that "there is no respect of persons with God."

Let not us, my brethren, pass lightly on regarding this merely as a censure on the bigotry of the Jews. The Apostle no doubt, directed his expressions first to them. But would he have used such extensive terms, had he not also intended that they should be extensively applied? "O man, whosoever thou art," is a very comprehensive mode of expression, and well shall we do

in applying it every one to him or herself; now, at this season especially appointed for self-examination, and repentance.

Are none here conscious of that self-satisfied disposition? Have none among us ever censured others for disobedience, when we ourselves have done the same things? Have none among us, equally with them, thrown away our advantages, or neglected the pure and proper services of our God; though it may be that a different temptation from theirs, has acted upon us, and therefore has cast us into a different description of transgression?

“Light has come into the world;” and the light, and knowledge of our duty has unquestionably shined on us. But if obedience to that duty be declined, because it mortifies the flesh; and requires that we restrain ourselves from the pursuit of present gratification, and that we purify ourselves in hope of that reward, which He who is pure shall allot to the faithful in his heavenly

kingdom; it will shine to our condemnation. In that case we shall be like the perverse Jews, who knew the things that are excellent, but did them not. And upon us therefore, in such case, as well as upon them, will that same condemnation most justly fall.

It is well for us, my brethren, born in a christian country, and baptized into the privileges and adoption of the children of God, to bear in mind that which the Apostle here urges so strongly: namely, the increased responsibility, which that increase of privilege brings with it. Where ignorance unavoidably prevails, there, no doubt, allowance will be made for it. But what reason is there for supposing that it will be made, for any deficiency beyond that which absolute necessity has unavoidably so occasioned? There is none whatever.

“As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law.” It is not said that they shall necessarily perish *for* their ignorance, but that their destruction

shall be without any addition of punishment in consideration of the law. And why? The reason is obvious. Because they knew it not; and therefore they ignorantly offended against it. “But still it is pronounced that they shall perish, if they offend against the light of conscience within them.

“As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.” They have had the advantage of farther privileges, and farther knowledge: and they shall be judged for their abuse or improvement of them. It shall be done to both, according to that perfect rule of equity laid down in the holy scriptures, “according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” *

But, be it remembered, that we have, not only a certain positive knowledge in the way that should lead us unto life; but we have also the power of extending that knowledge, and improving the practice which

* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

springs from it. We have them, as necessarily inherent in the degree of information with which we have already been blessed. So says the scripture, "He that hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."

Who then here shall complain, that the more perfect understanding of the law of God is not extended to them? Ask yourselves, my brethren. May not this arise from our own fault? Have we employed to the very utmost of our powers the means and advantages set before us? Have we drawn back from no exercise of righteousness and temperance? Have none of us sacrificed to the world and its vanities those times, and opportunities, and powers, of whatever different kinds, which all might have been applied to our improvement in the ways of godliness?

Beware my brethren, for our danger is great. Remember that not the hearers of the law, but the doers, are justified before

God. They who so sacrifice to the world the seasons, like this, which are appointed for religious consideration, and religious improvement; prove too plainly, that they hate to be reformed, and have cast the word of salvation behind them.

Before we pass on to the other matter close at hand, which will bring us, (as I trust in God, with some practical improvement), to the conclusion of this lecture; I pause to notice another of those extraordinary parentheses, which to the careless reader so often perplex the reasonings of this Apostle. And this, as you must recollect, is done, not that we may cavil at the Apostle's style, but that the greater care and diligence may be applied to the study of this epistle. The twelfth verse of this second chapter ends with these words, "As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." From thence the sense passes on easily enough into the following verse, "For not the hearers of the law are

just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." But when we arrive at the sixteenth verse in this way of reading, it opens with words which have no immediate connection with that verse which preceded it.

"The Gentiles," says the Apostle, "shew the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ."

Such is the way in which the words run. But does the sense also run thus with them? Far from it. The last passage beginning "In the day" has, evidently, no connection directly with the words next before it. But leave out the whole parenthesis, which according to the sense should be marked from the beginning of the thirteenth to the end of the fifteenth verse, and the sense is clear and obvious.

“As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, &c.” The other matter comes in afterward. It is by way of a comment; an application and explanation of the matter; and if considered in this manner it cannot be misunderstood.

Here again then, is a striking instance of the need which we have for much care and caution, to be applied to the writings of St. Paul. So truly did St. Peter say,* that they who are unlearned and unstable, are those who wrest (who pervert), the things in St. Paul's epistles; and that they do it to their own destruction.

The Apostle has stated the equal and just method, by which the judgments of God will be administered. He has shewn that there is a light yet left, within the conscience of the most uninformed; and that every one will be judged according to the means

* 2 Pet. iii. 16.

which he has possessed, of serving the Lord, and working righteousness; whether such means shall have been great or small. None therefore, to whom it has been possible to obtain information, can expect to escape punishment under the plea of ignorance. It is the common plea; but it is commonly false, when viewed in this, its just and proper light.

But now St. Paul turns to the more privileged: to those who have enjoyed greater blessings, and more advantages. Now he demands of them, in their turn; what shelter they can find, in all their knowledge and boast of information, if they be found deficient in their practice? And here, my brethren, comes a question which will touch *us* home. "Behold (says he), thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God; and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent; being instructed out of the law: and art confident, that thou thyself art a

guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes; who hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law." Such may be said to be the state of all now under the gospel dispensation; who live as we do, in the peaceable exercise of the religion which we profess; and with the advantage of unrestrained access to the holy and inestimable scriptures, which "are able to make us wise unto salvation."

To us then let the question which follows be applied, if we would profit by the word of God, and not be found to turn aside from it, when it ceases to suit well with our worldly ideas, or pursuits. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Such is the query which St. Paul proposes to the privileged Jews; privileged, as they were still fond of accounting themselves, in his own days, He seems to admit their knowledge; but he turns it upon themselves. He calls on them to shew what

were the fruits, which their superior advantages had been found to bear, in the conduct of their own lives.

The opportunity for ourselves also, is one which ought not to be lost, for much is the enquiry needed; and in this season especially ordained to be devoted to repentance; well does it deserve, nay, imperatively does it demand, our most serious attention.

We, like the Jews in that respect, have our schools, for the instruction of the ignorant at home. And well is it done, that such institutions have been founded among us, and are properly supported. It is one portion of godly care and conduct. But let us not forget, that one portion, is not all which is needed.

We have moreover missions, to impart the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ our Saviour whom he hath sent, to the heathen, who have hitherto sat in darkness. So far again is well; and it is an endeavour worthy of the servants of our

Blessed Redeemer. But neither does that approach at all to the complete fulfilment of a Christian's duty. Charity and brotherly love, and our Lord's injunction, all command us to have care for our brethren, whether near to us, or far off; and to benefit them to the utmost of our power. But still no professions of universal good will; no, nor even active exertions to confer benefits, though of the most essential description, upon others; can make good the whole of that duty, which we are bounden to perform.

Still there will remain duties of inward discipline, of preparation of the heart and spirit, of devotion of the soul really and heartily to God. And these will be required, as the motives; by which our outward good deeds must be directed, if they would be accounted as done in the spirit of the true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Still must there be found in us a willingness, to submit ourselves to all godly discipline. There must be a readiness to

controul our evil affections, and passions; and to bring every thing into obedience, not only to the letter, but to the spirit of that holy gospel, by which we all, with more or less sincerity profess to walk.

What think we then of ourselves, my brethren, on this view of our case? In many instances, doubtless, well enough. But is the loose satisfaction with which self-conceit fills some, and utter carelessness, others; is that to be set forth, as any sort of answer to the question, which I would have particularly brought before us at this time? "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"

Where is the instance of misdoing, on occasion of which numbers might not be brought forward, who censure it freely; while they draw no inferences to themselves, from the condemnation which they can so readily utter upon others?

The wisdom of the Gentiles had not preserved them from most egregious folly, in all

their notions concerning religion. Though they could teach others in some matters; though they could talk gravely, and sometimes powerfully, on the dignity of the divine nature; yet their whole worship was a disgrace to it; a disgrace to that which they professed to honour.

The Jew, with all his superior, infinitely superior privileges, and information, in the way of righteousness; in spite of all that pure knowledge, in which he had been instructed; and of that holy worship, to the outward observance of which he was ever labouring to bring the heathen, as proselytes; the Jew himself was little better. With all those advantages, he taught not himself; he forgot that purity which was in the spirit of the law; to follow and almost to worship, the forms of its exterior service, and the follies of his own traditions.

And Christians too on their part.—We, even we ourselves, my brethren, what is too generally found to be the manner, and

what the measure of our observance? So long as it can run in a routine, which the custom of society at this day has condescended to recognise; the worldly spirits who *call* themselves after the name of Christ, will vouchsafe to acknowledge the obligation. And therefore, as much as from any real principle of obeying God Almighty, and serving him; therefore it is, that too many (I do not say all) pay even their customary and visible devotions, even on the sabbath day.

Who they are that do so, that is from mere shew; and who they are who do it from better motives, others cannot always decide; and all should be backward to pretend to the power of making such decision. But all may judge themselves; and one obvious test by which to do so, lies at hand to all. All may easily know, if they will but truly search and examine within, how far their heart goes with their words; how far their own spirit accompanies their acts

of devotion. All may observe, for instance, how far their own respect for the Lord's sabbath carries them, beyond the service which is paid within the walls of his church. And if from thence they speedily turn to levities, and gaiety of amusement; or to feastings, as some do; or to matters of a merely common secular nature, wherein the Lord comes not near their thoughts; they may be but too certainly convinced, that their heart is far from him.

Or let us apply the same consideration to the services and exercises, which peculiarly belong to this season of fasting and humiliation. Let those who are seldom wanting in readiness to teach others, so far as blame will do it, and to censure others; shew that they have not forgotten, that there are duties to be learned; or at least, to be improved as to the practice of them, by themselves. Still is this necessary among us. Still have we, and ever shall we have, need for the exertion of all the means

which we can command, in order to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection.

And yet it were unjust not to allow, that in some respects, a degree of decency and decorum at least, if it cannot be called by a yet better name, has come to be observed among us. The excessive gaieties which some few years since did obtrude themselves on the view, and shock the minds, of devout and sober Christians, at this holy season, have for the most part ceased; at least during this portion of the year. If therefore there be occasionally an instance of such an outrage on christian feeling, it may be hoped that even it also will be removed from the appointed days of fasting and self-mortification.

All this is well, so far as it goes. But chiefly is it to be observed with gladness, because it gives hope of yet better things. Remember our Blessed Saviour's words, "These ought ye to have done, and not

to leave the other undone." Remember that we are called to perform not a blind, but a reasonable service.

And are we then authorised to rush blindly into every way which temptation may open before us? Are we to imagine that the whole blame of luxury, and dissipation, and waste of time and talents, and neglect of self-examination and repentance, rests only on them who put forward that which gives the invitation to transgression? Such is the deceit with which too many satisfy their blinded; aye, wilfully blinded consciences.

What, if a snare be spread before us. Have we no power to withhold our foot from stepping into it? Must it of necessity follow, because the temptation is placed in sight, that it must be one from which we cannot stand away? You yourselves know, my brethren, that such is not the case. If any one were to charge you with being unable to go, otherwise than as you were led by any individuals (let them be

who they might), you would with indignation; repel the charge. In what respect then is it better to be enslaved by the temptations of pleasure, or of fashion, than by their force; or by the fear of offending them, which interest might excite?

My brethren, we all know well enough what it is our duty to do; though few indeed are they who have not that mischievous ingenuity, which can always find excuse in the instance of themselves, for that which they so easily and freely condemn in that of others. Nor does it at all follow that such condemnation is otherwise than just. The offence committed may, and does too commonly, deserve it. But the evil is now, even as it was with the wise among the heathens, and with the learned among the Jews; that while they judged those who offended, they themselves did the same things.

Learn then to distrust ourselves. Learn to have courage enough, to make a stand

against an evil world; whatever be the wiles of its temptations, or the snares of its influence, and example. Remember that the Christian is called to wrestle against flesh and blood; and not to give way before them. If self-restraint and self-denial be required; and we ourselves can often perceive that they are so, when the conduct of others is in question; recollect that no law which we or our upholders can set up, is able to support us in the neglect of it. Nor can any licence of opinion, though it may be miscalled fashion and liberty, justify it. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* So speaks the Apostle, and we all know that his sentence is just and true.

* James iv. 17.

LECTURE IV.

ROMANS iii. 12.

THEY ARE ALL GONE OUT OF THE WAY: THEY ARE
TOGETHER BECOME ABOMINABLE; THERE IS NONE
THAT DOETH GOOD, NO NOT ONE.

THE subject of our last lecture led us to observe that which the Apostle says, of the equity of the dispensations of Almighty God. Privileges were shewn to have been given to the Jew above the Gentile, for an especial purpose. That purpose was, to preserve the knowledge of Him and of his truth, in that race, from whence, according to the flesh, the Redeemer was, in fulness of time, to proceed.

But though great advantages necessarily attended upon that privilege, yet it was shewn, that nothing like an unjust partiality could be charged upon the divine government. Each sort of persons was to be made accountable, for the use or abuse of that measure of information in the duties of man, which was by divine wisdom placed within its reach. The Gentile was accountable for the employment of the faculties, and of the reason which he possessed; and for the application of them to observe the visible effects of God's providence in the conduct of the universe. The Jew was accountable for much more; since he had for centuries enjoyed the benefit of God's word, and the prophetic revelations. These had been personally given, through many ages; and had been afterward left on record in his hands: and it was a record, the truth of which he did not, even in the worst days of that people, pretend to dispute.

Both therefore were pronounced to be

equally responsible; according to the measure of the talent entrusted to each. To whom much was given, of them much was required; and it was shewn that “there is no respect of persons with God.”

The same was shewn to be applicable, in its principle, to ourselves, my brethren. We enjoy a more perfect knowledge of the word of God; a purer faith; a form of worship more free from error and superstition, than of the many nations which surround us. Let us recollect that still, as of old, there is no respect of persons with God. We are now the favoured occupiers of ten talents. If therefore our manner of occupying them be put to shame, by the greater diligence of them who hold but one; if our greater knowledge of the pure doctrines of christianity, do not lead to greater diligence and self-controul, in the practice of the holiness which is of faith; they, even our most benighted neighbours, shall rise up in the judgment against this generation, and shall

condemn it. Their conduct (mistaken as it may be) shall condemn us; if they *do* follow the true course so far as they have been taught to do; while we, though we have it plainly shewn to us, refuse to follow the straight and narrow way which leadeth unto everlasting life.

Having thus shown the perfect equity, with which the dealings of God are conducted toward all mankind, the Apostle goes on to the objection which the Jews would make. He asks (in the person of one of them), what were the advantages or benefits which they in particular enjoyed. He answers in his own person, that they had been great, even in that circumstance alone, of their possessing the recorded revelation of God's will. "Much (says he) every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

And to what, except the profession of that written word; to what else could rationally be ascribed the freedom from idolatry,

and all its gross errors and impurities; which, since the return from Babylon, nation had ceased to be defiled; even five hundred years and more.

“Thy word (says the Psalmist) is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto paths.” To that light they had been able to return, and so to find the right way, whenever they were but really disposed, in their hearts so to do. How much more blessed than the most learned among the Greeks. The best and wisest of whom admitted that they knew little or nothing of Deity; and could not attain to such knowledge, without an express revelation sent to guide them.

Great was indeed the blessing bestowed “in that, to them, the Jews, were committed the oracles of God!” Great is the same blessing, now committed in like manner to ourselves, and to all of the reformed religion, in every church and every community. The grossness of idolatry is stop-

short: the darkness of superstition and utter ignorance, cannot close over that holy word. The light still shineth, and will shine unto the perfect day; though now, even as of old, there will be some perverse and blinded spirits, who will go astray; who love "darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Cherish then, my brethren; let us cherish as our most valuable profession, that light, which the word of the Lord sheds forth upon us in those blessed scriptures. Let us "not be disappointed of our hope," our best and eternal hope; by any cunning craftiness on the one side, or by mistaken and mis-called liberality on the other. Let us stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free; and beware that we sell not our birthright, for any present prospect of ease, or gratification.

The third chapter of this epistle which we have now before us, opens in regular form of a dialogue. The Apostle begins in the person of the Jew, with the objections

which were urged by those of that nation against the christian liberty from the ritual law; and against the opening of the gate of salvation through Christ, to all the faithful among the Gentiles. He objects as a Jew to this, as if it were a thing inconsistent with the original promises of peculiar blessing to the Jews. The dialogue should be understood as going on by alternate verses, from the first to the ninth, where St. Paul takes the discourse up in his own person, at the words, "No in no wise, &c." And when he used that expression in the fifth verse, "I speak as a man;" he intended to make us fully understand this, namely, that he was using the mode of reasoning, which a man of his own nation would of course use.

The Jew is represented as arguing, that it is unjust to punish him for unbelief, if the falsehood of his aspersions upon the Lord Jesus, had tended to promote his honour, and advance the kingdom of God.

That such was the case is notorious. The dispersion of the followers of christianity, in consequence of the bitter opposition and persecution of the Jews, dispersed also together with them the knowledge of the faith which they professed. It spread the name of the Lord in a very short time, over the face of the whole Roman empire; which included at that time, far the greater part of the civilized world. It scattered the word, thinly indeed at first, as seed is sown on the ground; but by the favour and blessing of the Almighty, it soon sprang up and bare fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. It increased in different proportions, according to the different conditions and circumstances of those, to whom it came. But every where it *did* increase; according to Gamaliel's sagacious prediction: "If this thing be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."

The only difficulty in the understanding

of the opening of this chapter, when thus read as a dialogue, verse for verse, between the Jew and Christian, 'so far as to the second sentence of the ninth verse; is perhaps at the eighth. But this is not very difficult of comprehension, when we recollect what was the manner of St. Paul's writing; wherein he commonly left many expressions to be supplied, as the sense pointed out the necessity for them, in pursuance of his argument.

So there, the Jew is made to plead; "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie (that is through my conduct, which belied my profession of belief in him, and of obedience due to him); if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie, unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?"

Here ends the speech on the part of the Jew; for the next verse relates to a charge brought by the enemies of christianity against its profession; and (as they said, though

falsely), against its practice. But in the Apostle's short way, the beginning of that verse is left to be understood by the reader: as if he had written, "And why not add (of *us* Christians, he meant to say) as we are slanderously reported, &c. let us do evil that good may come."

He evidently has turned from the speech of the Jew, as these last words plainly shew. And he blames most strongly, and in terms of utter condemnation, that sentiment, which he tells us that their enemies were used to put into their mouths; falsely, to do so, as if they had been the usual speech of the Disciples.

I must however observe here, that the word "rather" in the beginning of that eighth verse, tends, as it seems to me, to perplex the sense. You will all of you perceive, on turning to it, that the word does not exist in the original; because it is printed in the italic character; which is always done purposely, to give intimation that

it is an insertion of the translators. Inserted (no doubt) it has been, under the idea of explanation; but in this instance, (as it seems to me), with an unfortunate effect; as tending to perplex, and not to clear, the passage.

The Jew has pleaded, that it is unjust to punish him, if his want of faith has caused the work of God to prosper. And such was the case. The Apostle replies, that he might as well argue, that the evil maxim which the unbelievers imputed to Christians, was commendable. “Let us do evil that good may come.” But we must recollect that he stamps it as a slander, that any such thing should be reported of them; and adds, that its utter condemnation (including of course those who employed it), is just.

All then, Jews and Gentiles alike, are shewn to have brought themselves under the imputation of sin. The wisdom of the Greeks, or Gentiles, had not preserved them from gross error and general disobedience. Neither had the revelations, nor all the

national advantages so amply given to the Jews, saved them from sin; which though of a different description, equally rendered them liable to condemnation. So that the word of scripture was true in regard to both. "There is none that doeth good, no not one." *

Here then we come to a passage, of which (as it seems to me), a very improper use is made at this day by many; who doubtless mean well, but unfortunately do that which is really prejudicial to true religion. For those sweeping expressions of condemnation are taken by them, as involving the greater proportion of mankind; and as delivered absolutely; without any regard to the occasion on which, or the manner in which, St. Paul makes use of them.

"They are all gone out of the way; they are together become abominable, there is *none* that doeth good, no not one." Such are the words which follow, in continuation

* Pet. xiv. 3.

of those to which we have come, in the course of our enquiry into this epistle. Now in the first place; surely that which is said with a view to particular things, and in immediate and manifest reference to them, ought not to be construed as having respect to general matter, so much as to those things. And this must strike us at once, if we reflect on the former part of this chapter. St. Paul has been speaking of Jews and of Gentiles. He has been shewing that neither of them had any claim to the salvation of God; because both alike had abused the means of knowing and of following his truth, in such proportion as it had been imparted to each. And for that reason it was that he proceeded to this passage, which condemns the conduct of both the one and the other. For that reason he declares, that neither the one nor the other could advance any thing like a *claim* to the favour of the Almighty; nor assert any *right* to be admitted to his favour, and to the

inheritance of his eternal and inconceivable reward. He proves therefore that, of which it is a great object with him in this epistle to convince them all, that they have *all* gone out of the way, and lost all pretension to claim eternal reward, as of their own deserving. And from thence he proceeds to bring them onward to that hope, on which alone the erring sons of mortality can ever soberly, and with real safety, repose. He cites the book of Psalms, that (as Philip did to the Æthiopian eunuch) he may “begin at that scripture, and preach unto them Jesus.”

Such is the use which sober and well-informed preachers will make of that doctrine, which he here brings forward and enforces; that doctrine of the general, aye of the universal depravation of mankind. But such is not the use to which it is always applied at this day. Few can have failed to observe the exaggerated manner in which this matter has been represented, by those

who often mean well; but while they keep watch over some of their passions, who seem not to be aware that they allow themselves to be deluded in a very mischievous manner, by other impulses and feelings of their mind. They are fond of representing human nature as one mass of unmixed corruption! And in confirmation of that doctrine, we hear those words cited which have introduced my discourse this day. But we hear them brought forward (as has too often been the case in regard to other texts of scripture), without any regard to the particular matter to which St. Paul intended them to be applied. To that however our attention must be turned, unless we would incur the fearful charge of "wresting and perverting his expressions." For if they be so wrested, as to produce presumption on the one hand, or despair on the other, it must needs tend toward their own destruction who shall be guilty of such perversion.

But it may perhaps be asked, "How can

the doctrine of universal corruption, and of the most utter sinfulness, laid upon all mankind, puff up any one with vain conceits?" It may be asked, "Must not every one be conscious of composing in part such mass of abominable wickedness?" When stated thus plainly, it becomes at once evident, that sound reason will, nay, that it must lead to such conclusion, if it ever do admit that, which is thus asserted universally of *all* mankind, and yet so precisely. I say universally, not generally; for a general assertion will admit cases of exception; but an assertion so universal and yet so precise as "none, no not one," can admit no exception.

And yet do we not plainly see, that those who maintain such doctrine, do contrive to forget how it *must* involve themselves? Or else, in spite of all sense and meaning of the most positive words (according to their interpretation of them), that they do contrive some way for themselves to escape?

It cannot possibly be, that they who con-

sider Scripture as having denounced the penalties of divine vengeance for unmixed sinfulness; (and such are invariably declared to be its reward); it cannot be, that they should go on under the feeling that they have incurred that sentence, together with all their fellow mortals; and yet go on, as those who make such avowals evidently do, in peace and hope. Nor do they so. But there is a delusion with which they impose on their own minds; and then, fancying themselves to be safe, they imagine that they may scatter the avenging fire of divine wrath on all around them.

Now what does holy Scripture invariably teach concerning the natural man?—That is to say, What does it teach concerning man in his state of nature; unredeemed, and unsanctified, by God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost? No doubt it teaches that the imaginations of his heart are now, as they were at the time of the universal deluge, only evil continually.

But to what purpose has our Saviour died? Or to what, has divine grace been sent forth by the Holy Spirit, if that depravation of our nature is not to be amended by the latter, and our absolute curse and condemnation reversed by the former; so as to make our absolute condemnation remediable; so that such as are really faithful, and therefore penitent, may, by that grace, and through that atonement, escape from such utter condemnation?

The imaginations of man's heart are then influenced; though not constrained, from above; to take a better course than that which nature would have taught. Faith teaches the true Christian to endeavour to follow such guidance; and the help of God, for Jesus Christ's sake strengthens such endeavours, and counts them to us graciously for real righteousness. Though real righteousness if the term be used in strictness, would be nothing short of perfect obedience. And thus it is, as the Apostle

says, that "by grace ye are saved, through (or by the fruits of) faith; and that not of themselves; it is the gift of God: not of works (not deservedly, nor to be claimed on account of them), lest any man should boast."

But in this sweeping charge, not of general depravity, which is but too true, but of universal and unvarying wickedness unmixed with any goodness, which is thus with an unsparing hand cast upon *all* alike, as if it were to be drawn by fair and legitimate construction from the words of the Apostle; in spite of this, I say, there is evidently a way left for escape. It is left for their own benefit, by those who lay this imputation on all. It is to operate for their own advantage as they persuade themselves, through a delusion which partial reading has confirmed, after enthusiasm had given birth to it.

For can it possibly be imagined that any persons can go on, really feeling that they

are themselves void of all sort or description of that "holiness, without which they own that no man can see the Lord,"* (as St. Paul says) unless they have some such device, under which to find an imaginary shelter for themselves? The thing is impossible.

There have indeed (no doubt), been some who have holden such tenets in the fervor of a distempered mind. Thus they have fallen into despair, and have been sometimes tempted thereby to do violence to themselves; and to rush, in the presumptuous and foul crime of self-murderers, uncalled, into the presence of their judge. But such fanaticism, and such enormity, which is its natural fruit, sufficiently condemn themselves.

That is not however the case with many; though many will thus misquote St. Paul's expression, of which we have here spoken. They have builded a wall (as it were), to shelter themselves from all the horrors which

* Heb. xii. 11.

they raise: but they have builded (as says the prophet Ezekiel)* with “untempered mortar.” On what can they rest? Or why should they suppose that they should be exempted from the expression, there is none that doeth good, no not one; if it be made one of universal application without regard to the matter with which it is connected? They rely on some delusion, that they are chosen and elected of God, fore-ordained to salvation; without regard to their lives, or to their works. But remember, my brethren, that election is always to a covenant; that it may admit to privileges, or favours, or advantages; but that it never alters the condition of any man, from a state of trial, to one of security.

The children of Israel were elected to be the chosen people; “But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” The city of

* xiii. 10.

Jerusalem was elected, and fore-ordained to be the holy place, where God would put his name. Yet twice has it been overthrown for its crimes; and the name of an impostor and false prophet now reigns there triumphant. The Apostle Judas was elected, to be our Blessed Lord's companion upon earth; and he was elected also after death to be one of the twelve, who should sit on twelve thrones "judging the twelve tribes of Israel." From all that privilege he however by transgression fell, when he failed under his probation; he fell to the effect that he might go to that place of perdition, which his crime had made his own.

The Apostle Paul's words teach nothing contradictory to this. With regard to the perfect fulfilment of that righteousness which conscience taught the Gentiles, he declared that *all* had gone astray, and that there was not one that did righteousness. With regard to the Jews, who had enjoyed a clearer light, he nevertheless declared the same.

And the result to which he brought them was this, that none could claim to be saved for their works, but purely for the grace of God through Christ Jesus. He taught that no professions, and no belief alone, without the works of faith, would save us; but that the wrath of God is revealed in the gospel, against "all unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" that is to say, who profess to believe, or do believe, but do not the righteousness which the Gospel demands.

But though this be not said of Christians, that there is none that doeth good; though we learn that goodness may be imputed to the faithful (through the grace of our Blessed Lord, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost); yet what multitudes are there who call themselves Christians, and yet deserve no better report or character, than this which the Apostle gives to unbelieving Jews, or heathens! Let us not argue (my brethren), from the name to the thing;

which is an easy, and a flattering way, but full of most dangerous deceit; but let us argue, if we would know the truth, from our practice, to the name which ought in strict justice to be affixed to it.

It is easy to call ourselves Christians; and if a name would save us, there is no doubt that none would be lost. But our Lord has left us a very distinct warning, against any such wretched self-delusion. He has said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Not every one that saith unto me Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Names of party and of reproach, my brethren, do nothing but harden the professed disciples of the same heavenly Master, the one against the other. Let our enquiry be into ourselves; and if we would avoid the imputation of unfaithfulness to the service which we have undertaken, let us not fear

to search, and thoroughly to examine ourselves.

What man lives, who can presume to say that the hour of the Lord's heavy judgments is not presently coming; aye, in part actually come upon the earth? Who can have paid any attention to the wonderful events, which have, within the memories of very many of us, taken place; without noticing the characters predicted, as indicating times which call upon us all to prepare for the final judgments of the Almighty?

I venture not to foretell (my brethren) the things which are about to come. Nor can I consider them as acting judiciously, who do venture upon any such measure, in confidence of that which they conceive to be pointed out, by the dark suggestions of unaccomplished prophecy. Those things are thus far hinted (as it seems to me) in dark figures; in order that when the event shall have unfolded them, a clear testimony may be afforded to the wisdom and provi-

dence of God. These things are so far told "before they come to pass, that when they are come to pass we may believe."— But it is vain and presumptuous, for man to seek "to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

Yet general signs have been named, as indications from which we are to conclude that the end is drawing near. But be it remembered, that we are no where told how near at hand it may be. Near perhaps it may be, in comparison with the whole of time; and yet it may be to any individual distant, so far as regards his own time; or it may be coming even suddenly, at an instant. There is only one proper conclusion to be drawn. And may the Lord grant us all grace to make, and to improve it! "Be ye therefore ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

Unquestionable it is that risings of people,

and tumults, and wars; and fearful commotions, beyond all former recollection, have in our times fallen on the world. And what says our Lord of them? "These are the beginnings of sorrows."

What manner of persons then ought we to be, in all holiness and godliness of living; if we would hope to be enabled to endure that, which may, not at all improbably, be appointed for our own days? Shall we go on, because the tide of mankind still holds that course; in pursuing the empty follies and vanities, which swallow up the days and years of so many? Think not that professions and intentions will suffice. If we would avoid being hurried down the stream to the pit of destruction, we must struggle upward; and not be satisfied with that which demands no exertion, nor any self-controul.

Remember then, that though many there may be in these days, who deem themselves sufficiently secure against the charge

of having become abominable, which they think a strong expression; yet that the Apostle's language does seem manifestly to include many more than absolute profligates. He seems to include under that strong expression, those who have "gone out of the way," to follow the inventions of man; and those also who "do not good." The absence of positive and active well-doing, must therefore be accounted for positive and actual sin. It was so in the Romans. It was so in the Jews. And even so, in like manner must it be, with those who "say and do not;" though they may seek never so much, to cover themselves under the shadow of the Christian name.

LECTURE V.

ROMANS iv. 13.

FOR THE PROMISE THAT HE SHOULD BE THE HEIR OF THE WORLD (WAS), NOT TO ABRAHAM OR TO HIS SEED THROUGH THE LAW, BUT THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH. A

MY last lecture took into consideration the subject of the general (not the universal and unmixed), depravity of man. It pointed out, that the Apostle intended to enforce the necessity of redemption for all, because all had sinned against that degree of light which each possessed. And it shewed that his sweeping expressions of the abominable sinfulness of all, were indeed intended for Jews, and Greeks alike; but are not to be thus fully extended to them who are Christians and disciples indeed.

The same argument is continued to the end of that third chapter. And it is strongly enforced, that no man living had, nor now has, any *claim* to the favour of God; because all have sinned, and come short of the conditions of the covenant on their part. He points out therefore the free gift and bounty of the Almighty, in having of his grace alone, without any sort of claim or right on the part of man, sent forth his salvation through Jesus Christ, to them who work the righteousness of faith. "Therefore (says he) we conclude that a man is justified by faith (is put into a condition wherein he may be capable of salvation by faith), without the deeds of the law;"* that is, without any claim of merit, for having perfectly obeyed the law; which no man has done.

The gift of salvation is free; not because any man is saved arbitrarily in unrepented

sin; but because it is of “grace, and not of debt;” because it is given through the merits and atonement of our Saviour to man; and is not due to any man. It is given to them who mortify the flesh and do the works of the spirit through faith; trusting in our Blessed Redeemer’s merits and mercies; and not to them who work, trusting in their own merits, and in the value of their own performance.

This course of argument leads the Apostle forward, to consider the principle, upon which obedience to the commands of God, even the most apparently arbitrary among them, obtained commendation and reward. For great was the value which the Jews in all times attributed, especially to the observance of such arbitrary institutions as were of divine appointment. The principle was good; but they corrupted it to evil. It was good, because compliance with that of which the utility was not obvious, must have been paid through faith in Him who required

such compliance. But they abused it by losing sight of the reason why such obedience was counted for righteousness before God; and forgetting that godly living rested on precisely the same foundation, and is equally a work of faith. For it is to be paid, not because we judge it to be proper, wholesome, kind, or good, which would depend on the judgment of man; but solely because we know that God commands man to practise it; and because we believe that He will reward those who endeavour, and punish those who refuse, so to do.

The Jews farther abused the principle of obedience to positive institutions, such as were the greater part of those in their ceremonial law; by losing sight, in process of time altogether of God's moral law; of the righteousness which ought to proceed from faith; and by resting on the act alone. And so they went on to the imputation of merit to the observance of their own traditions, while they forgot the weightier mat-

ters of the law, justice, mercy, and peace. Be it not forgotten my brethren, that in this course the worship of the Romish church even down to our own days has too much followed their example. For therein it is taught that masses and forms of words repeated, and that penances, and ceremonies, have a merit in themselves; and that they do, by the very act of their performance, tend to give a title to eternal salvation.

So universal has been the tendency of human pride, towards the claim of satisfactory merit as existing in itself; and that in all ages, and among all people. For it was much the same also among the heathen, in respect of their rites, and gifts; their processions, and sacrifices.

Such is the fruit of superstition, which has shewn itself in all ages and all religions; superstition, which always arises from a deficiency of true christian faith. Here therefore the Apostle opens this fourth chapter, with shewing that no rites or ceremonies, nor

any acts of service, had produced the justification of Abraham. That is to say, they had not altered his condition by nature, nor given him any right, to stand as one who could claim salvation before God on account of them.

The Jews stood, as they imagined, upon acts of outward service, and ceremonious observances. The Apostle points out to them, that Abraham had not been chosen of God on account of his performances of these; but that he had been so chosen long before they were ordained, for the uprightness of his practices; which arose from implicit belief in, and obedience to, the Lord.

He was chosen moreover by the free grace and favour of God; who was not, and could not be, bounden to make any such choice, nor to give him any such pre-eminence; whatever his righteous conduct or obedience might have been. Yet we must never forget, that though he did choose and prefer him by favour of his own

free grace, yet such grace was not bestowed on him until he had proved himself, by his faith working righteousness, to be (so far as man can be) deserving of it. It was not a debt paid, but a favour bestowed; yet bestowed on one who had diligently studied to shew himself not unworthy of it.

The words of the epistle,* “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt,” must not be strained beyond the meaning, which the whole course of the Apostle’s reasoning in this place plainly conveys. They signify that when a man works so as to have earned, and become entitled to his hire; it is that to which he has a right: it is then, in such case, not given to him as a favour, but as payment of a just debt. He does not mean to undervalue the works of godliness, which true faith will always move the sincere Christian to shew forth; but to admonish us, that those

* 4 v.

works, at the very best are so imperfect, that they cannot on the ground of right claim any reward.

And in the same way it is said in the next verse that God “justifieth the ungodly:” which must be understood not absolutely, but with reference to the rest of the argument, in the course of which it occurs. It is not, that God imputes righteousness to any persons, while they are persisting in courses of iniquity; but that he does so, while yet, in spite of all the good which their faith excites them to do, their work is so tainted by human depravity, as to be still *in his sight* short of true and perfect righteousness.

Or it may be taken (and some have so understood it), as referring to *Abraham's* former habits; when he lived with his father Terah, and probably served his Gods. So Joshua tells the Israelites. “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood, in old time;

even Terah the father of Abraham, and they served other gods.”* That sin of having served other gods was not imputed to him, when he had obeyed the Lord, and followed his especial calling to come out from that land, into one which he promised that he would give to him. This is plainly the real meaning. It certainly does not signify that Abraham was taken into favour while in a state of ungodly living; but when he had proved his faith, by active devotion of himself to the service of God then that faith, though his former account were unrighteousness in the sight of God, that active faith, was counted to him for righteousness.

It is a matter of no small importance that we should bear in mind the form of expression, which the Apostle uses in all the course of this argument. He is extremely careful, never to give any idea to his converts, that

* Josh. xxiv. 2.

their acts had any thing in them intrinsically, which could justify them in setting up a claim as of right, to the favour and blessing of God. The expression always is, not that their faith, even in the highest perfection to which they could carry it, was really and actually such as it ought to be; or that it produced such a life as could lay *claim* to reward at his hand. But he always says, that it was “counted to them for righteousness:” it was allowed to stand on their account, as if it had been perfect obedience and godliness.

The very expression that it was “counted to them,” proves that he intended to imply, that it was not really and essentially that, for which it was so accounted.

And to the same purpose it is that he introduces the words of David, from the thirty-second psalm, “Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven (not who has none to be forgiven, for there is no soul that liveth and sinneth not). Blessed is the

man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin." The imputation could not be made by a righteous Judge, had there not existed actual sin in every case. And therefore since criminality always is, and always will be found in man; so much as to take away all claim of right to the reward of righteousness (for it must be faultless, in order to be entitled of right to the reward): therefore the imputation of righteousness, the counting of righteousness to any one, must be the fruit of grace; that is to say, of divine favour, and of that alone.

Are we then, my brethren, to suppose that any claim can possibly belong to us, any more than it did to Abraham and to his seed of old? Can we, because we have been called into the fold of Christ here on earth, flatter ourselves that we have righteousness on that account, for which we may claim admission into his kingdom of heaven? Far from it. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," is the

precept which all must carry with them, if they would hope that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.

But it has been set up by some in their own favour, that such imputation of righteousness is altogether an arbitrary thing; and they who have set up the idea, have too commonly endeavoured to make their own claim upon it. Now whatever the Apostle says on the subject, he exemplifies it in Abraham. But what is there in this place where St. Paul speaks so much on the subject, which can with any fairness or reason be made to bear such signification? The covenant, so far as regarded the nation of the Jews, might in some sense be said to have been given arbitrarily; because it was given before they existed as a nation. But still it was for their forefather's faith; and in that respect, as to its original grant, and with reference to him, it was not arbitrary. The covering of Abraham's infirmity, and the grant to him of such a gracious promise

for his posterity, was not arbitrary. It was not given through the law; not through any forms or ceremonies; nor through any choice made arbitrarily of him without respect to his obedience, which is the foundation of all righteousness. But it was given through the righteousness of faith: because he believed fully in God who had promised; and therefore with boldness executed that which he was called to do.

Abraham then believed in God, and proved his belief; and that was counted to him for righteousness. And this happened thirteen years before he had received the covenant of circumcision; before he had been placed as the first member of the visible church of God.

To us this furnishes matter for consideration, not other than appropriate to the season, to which the mercy of the Lord has granted us again to come. For if the righteousness of faith was allowed by divine grace, to work so great things for Abraham;

the *righteousness* which is by faith, I say, and not mere belief on the one hand, nor any privileges, or promises, or forms of service on the other; to what does it teach us Christians to look as that to which our merciful God will impute merit for our Saviour's sake? Is it not to that righteousness which still ought to be, though in very many instances I fear that we cannot say that it now is, by faith? Perfected as the object of our faith now is; and infinitely cleared and improved as are its prospects, even to eternal, instead of temporal things; so much the more is that righteousness which ought in all cases to be its fruit, to be shewn forth by us.

The present is the season (if there be one above all others), peculiarly appropriate to the examination of our own courses and habits, in regard to this matter. We cannot more profitably employ the time which remains to us on this occasion, than in turning our serious attention toward it.

There is, as we all know, a promise made to us who are followers of the faith which is in Jesus Christ; a promise that we shall be inheritors, not of the world that now is, but of that which is to come. But as the ancient promise was made to Abraham, not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith; so is it now made to ourselves. And never let us forget, that it is to such righteousness, to such godly living, as shall proceed from faith in all the promises, and all the threatenings, and all the revelations of God, and not in some one or two selected parts of them, that such promise is made.

How then have we, even we ourselves, my brethren, and all who dwell around us to whom the influence of our word or of our example may extend—how have we shewn forth that righteousness? Have we given proof, that we are not only able, but willing to fight the good fight of faith? And do we bear in mind that such an expression, familiar as is its sound in our ears, implies

a conduct widely different from that of very many, far too many, among those who call themselves Christians? Where is the righteousness of faith in them, who would rest upon a name, a baptism, or a profession, without recollecting to what that name has pledged them; for what purpose the Holy Ghost in baptism offered (if they would accept them) his sanctifying influences; or what is the self-controul, and self-denial, and mortification of the flesh, which they either personally, or by sureties, then professed their determination to practise? Or what is the faith, on the other side, which seeks to be indicated by inward impressions alone, and imagined influences of the divine spirit? What is it worth, if these are not to produce the righteousness which always comes of faith, wherever that virtue really exists, and is not confounded with mere empty belief?

Well may the question which the Apostle here puts concerning Abraham, be pro-

posed also concerning all, and to all, who deceive themselves under any delusion of either sort; and so contrive to evade the shewing forth of those lively fruits, which are the only true proofs of faith; because they prove that the righteousness of faith is in us. Well, I say, may it be proposed now concerning us, though in a different way from that in which St. Paul here brings it forward.

“What shall we say then (asks he), that Abraham, our father according to the flesh, hath found?” What shall we say on our part, that we the children of God, by adoption and grace through our Lord Jesus Christ, have found? Have we found a law which will encourage us in wickedness? Far from it. Have we found a salvation to which we have been absolutely elected, and which cannot be lost by our evil doing? Nothing at all like it. Have we received any security for going on in useless, unprofitable, and therefore ungodly ways; and

imagining that we shall be saved by the blood of our Blessed Redeemer's sacrifice, without seriously keeping before us the awful question, "What must we do to be saved?" All such ideas are mere deceitfulness and ruin.

Too many perhaps may be found, who imagine that in the words here before us, the Apostle merely intended to undervalue the Jewish, that is the Mosaic, in comparison with the Christian law. And in St. Paul's epistles that distinction which the article makes, is often of the highest utility, but chiefly for those who can read them in the original language. For when he speaks, not of law in general, but of the law; it generally does designate the peculiar law of the Jews, with all its rites and ceremonies.

But we must recollect, that though this be a good and a useful rule, to be carried with us, yet it is not one of universal application in regard to our version. The very text with which I introduced this present

discourse proves it. We read, "The promise that he should be the heir of the world (was) not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." But in the original it is,* was not to Abraham or to his seed, through law. It is not said through the law, which might to some seem to mark the ritual law of the Jews; though we must remember that it existed not in Abraham's day. But it is said not to be through law; not on account of Abraham's having really and exactly fulfilled any law, which the Almighty had given.

It is as if he had written, It was not to Abraham or his seed, through the righteousness which they had shewn, in never failing to obey the commandments of God; for they had all failed. But it was through the righteousness which was imputed to him, on account of his acts of faith.

The object of the argument is to prove

* ου γαρ δια νομου η επαγγελια, &c.

that, which is said also in express terms; that the acceptation of Abraham and of his seed, was not "of debt." It was not owing to them, as to those who had actually deserved it at God's hand. But it was of grace. It was the fruit of God's favour, shewn to Abraham and to his seed after him, on account of his inflexible faith; that faith which induced him, under all trials and temptations, to do that which God commanded, and to put his trust in him, for a blessing on such deeds.

Here then is the point to which our imitation, if we would deserve the name of Christians, ought to be, nay, must be directed. We must learn to "walk by faith, and not by sight." We must learn to have respect to a state of things yet *to be* revealed; and not to any which we have seen, or can expect to see, so long as we remain in this our place of probation. We must learn to "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth."

And it is the latter part of this injunction which, unhappily for man, meets with the least attention from him. To look to reward hereafter, in the mere sense of simply expecting to inherit it, is indeed a very easy matter to a careless mind. But thus it is that many think of it, and never carry their considerations beyond that point.

Behold the young and the old alike; for the fault is not confined to any age, nor to either sex, among us. Behold them numbered ostensibly among the followers of our Blessed Redeemer; and of course (though they may think little or nothing upon the subject); yet of course acknowledging that they are debtors to his law, and covenant of holiness. They seem to imagine (if we may judge from the secure and careless habit of their lives), that they are heirs of the world by promise. They seem to suppose that their faith, such as it is, will save them; and without ever looking into the title which they thus set up, live in

that promise, which idleness and thoughtless habits encourage; that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant."

But where is any promise given by God, to such habits, and such manner of living? He has indeed, it is true, given a promise even to them. But it is not one on which they will much delight to dwell. He calls them, not to sit down thus contented and at ease, imagining that all is safe for them. But he commands all without exception, to "work out their own salvation." "With fear and trembling" are we commanded to work it out; not in peace, and indolence, and carelessness.

The promise which is given to us who call ourselves Christians, is, as St. Paul here declares, through the *righteousness* of faith. And who that gives any consideration to the matter, can be mistaken in such an expression as this?

Too well do we know, how fatally many have perverted the promises and assurances

which are made, in reference to faith. Too well do we know how many will profess that they have that virtue, while they know not (and how should they know, for they have never taken pains to learn)?—they know not what it is; and rest upon a mere profession and an empty name.

But the righteousness of faith must needs be beyond all such misconstruction. It is not a thing to be taken for granted in all, merely because they bear a christian name. It must be proved, by far other than a worldly life, if it would lay claim to those rewards, which are far above all that this wretched world can give.

Think, then ye careless ones, while yet the hour of thought and reflection in this mortal state is with you. Which of us can dare to say how long that period shall be, or how suddenly it shall be brought to an end? Beware of letting the reprobate mind grow up in you, and become confirmed, as it was in the heathen of old. It is a mind

which cannot endure to prove, and to examine things for itself, by the rule of the word of life; and therefore follows heedlessly in the track of others. However senseless, however stupid be their carelessness; it follows them even to "the blackness of darkness for ever."

The day which is yet before us is a day of probation; and never let us forget that it has an end; how near to any, or to all of us, we know not. The promise which is given to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, is that we shall be heirs; yet not heirs of this world, but of that which is to come. But still, recollect, my brethren, that inheritance is not actual possession. The Jews were heirs of promises, but they were disinherited in the instances of thousands; of many thousands, through all periods of their history. Because they failed to shew the obedience of children; God therefore withdrew from them the kindness, and protection, and forgiveness, of a Parent.

So then may it be (but may the Lord forbid that it should be) even with us! Let us never forget that "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore hasten to walk honestly, as in the day." "While ye have the light, walk as children of the light. And put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, that ye should fulfil the lusts thereof."

LECTURE VI.

ROMANS v. 20, 21.

GRACE DID MUCH MORE ABOUND; THAT AS SIN HATH REIGNED UNTO DEATH, EVEN SO MIGHT GRACE REIGN, THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS, UNTO ETERNAL LIFE, BY JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

IN the chapter which we last considered, the privileges of Abraham's seed according to the flesh, were noticed by St. Paul. They were shewn to depend not on their birth, but on their faith; and through that alone was it declared, that the privileges of their descent from him could be enjoyed by them individually.

But here again he turns to the Romans especially, who were not his seed according to the flesh; "to them who should walk

in the faith of their spiritual father Abraham (the father of the faithful, as he is called), in that faith which he had being yet uncircumcised." And great as were the advantages offered to the national seed, those which were to be given to his spiritual seed were yet greater.

Of that seed (my brethren), if it be not through our own fault, we ourselves and all Christians, shall be accounted for a portion. We are among the branches of the wild olive tree, which are "grafted in, to partake of the root and fatness" of the plant, which God originally planted in his own favour, and protection. Yet are we not so grafted in, but that we may be cut off. Nor are the especial advantages granted to the spiritual seed of Abraham such, as must of necessity bring us all into the rest of the heavenly Jerusalem; any more than the temporal advantages promised to the Jews in the wilderness, were effectual to bring all that people into the promised land.

The carcases of those who disobeyed, and with whom therefore "God was not well pleased," fell in the wilderness. And the souls of them who know the law of the covenant of salvation given through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, but keep it not, will infallibly be cast out from heaven; how much soever they may have been called of God, to enter by such means as he has appointed into his rest. For they will not have obeyed that calling, as it was given to them; and without holiness, which is the object and essence of his calling, no man shall see the Lord. If found without that garment of righteousness, they shall be cast out "into outward darkness, where shall be wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

The Apostle here begins, with declaring that the peace of the converts with their God, depended on the Lord Jesus Christ; not (as the Jews imagined that theirs still did), on the works of the old law, whether of the Patriarchal, or the Mosaic law. It

depended on the grace or favour "of God, who justifieth (or putteth into the situation of persons capable of being accepted), the imperfect, who are all in his sight ungodly;" and that he does through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the first privilege of Christians. And infinitely greater is it, than any which belongs to the covenant of works; a covenant, the fulfilments of which required constant works of holiness, without any sort of failure.

It is their privilege also, that the very things which they are made to suffer, do to the faithful, supply matter for joy and exultation. "Not only (adds he), but we glory in tribulation."*

But what sort of glorying was that, to which he thus encouraged them? Not a boasting of the things which they suffered. Not any puffing up of their conceit of their

* Rom. v. 3.

own sanctity, because they had courage and steadfastness so to endure.

Nor was their motive any pride of spirit which made them court persecution. Nor did they go out of their way, to oppose and revile the harmless customs, and indifferent practices, wherein others disagreed from them; merely because they did not conform to some system which they had been pleased to set up. The Apostles never courted tribulation, nor gloried in it after that manner; on the contrary, when duty did not require them to endure, they avoided it; and never provoked ill usage, in any vain conceit of their own strength. And so our great Master and Lord had commanded them, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another."

But they were specially inspired. Their understandings were opened by the Holy Ghost, to enable them to distinguish truly between the cases which occurred. And of that power of discrimination they availed

themselves; sometimes retiring from the tumult and danger, and sometimes facing it, and enduring all which could be inflicted. Their object was, that in all things the name of God might be praised; and not their own name nor their own courage. Their aim was, "That the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified."*

And such is, I trust even at present, the real aim and object of many sincere and devout Christians. But let it be remembered, that there may be a zeal which is not according to knowledge. There may be also a degree of self-deception operating on the mind, and that sometimes, when those on whom it acts, and acts powerfully too, are not conscious of it. And therefore the ambition of undergoing tribulations, is no proof in itself, of resemblance between those who feel it and the Holy Apostles of old.

* 2 Thes. iii. 1.

If the affectation of singularity prompt any Christians to differ from their neighbours, there can be nothing praiseworthy in *that*. If the desire of distinction prompt them to incur the ill will of those, over whom they would in any way exalt themselves as being especially holy, they have their reward. And if a mistaken zeal do really persuade them, that, as a matter of conscience, they are called of God, to follow any particular fancies or inward suggestions, which are unsupported by the fair construction of the recorded word of God; let them never allow themselves to imagine that evil report or any ill will incurred in such a manner, can be counted to them for righteousness.

Remember the Apostle's question, "What glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently?" Patience in all cases is the duty of a Christian; and he sins who fails to exhibit it. But there is no ground for praise when it has been

rendered necessary, by the consequences of our own ill-founded pretensions; whether they have sprung from fancy, deluded by enthusiasm, or from self-conceit.

They who suffered for Christ's sake in the Apostles' days, glorified in tribulations. But it was not with a vain glory; it was not as priding themselves on their own strength. The expression only signifies, that they felt a pleasure even under their sufferings. It was a pleasure grounded in faith and hope; and it is by St. Paul here mentioned, not by way of boasting in his own steadfastness; but for the sake of encouragement, to those who were likely to be exposed to the same endurance. Therefore he reminds them, that their patience and endurance worked their approval as true and faithful disciples; and to that approval of them in their christian profession, they well knew that the mercy of God would not fail, in his good time, to give reward.

The expression however, as we have it

in our version, is not so strong nor so accurate as it ought to be. We read thus, "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; &c."* Now experience is not the true meaning of the original word.† It signifies a test, or here the having endured a test. That tribulation produceth patience (or rather, makes it manifest), in the godly disposed, is well known to all; however little too many may have taken care, to keep their own patience ready at hand, when it may have been so required. But, that "patience worketh experience," is a passage not very easy to be comprehended: for it is not so much patience which does it, as the affliction itself. It worketh both patience, in the godly, and experience. But (as I before observed), "experience" is a word which does not convey exactly, the sense of the original expression.

* 3, 4 v. &c.

† δοκιμαζ

The word used in the Greek, is one which in its own direct signification means the assay (as it is called), or the putting of the precious metals (gold and silver) to the test, in order to try their purity. Now look upon the word "experience" in this sense, which any one who is well acquainted with the original language of the epistles, must know to be the true sense. There you have at once a plain, and a forcible idea, conveyed by the Apostle's words. Patience worketh proof; that sort of proof which is obtained by trying gold in the furnace: that is to say, proof of its genuine character and purity. And proof (such proof as makes the purity of our principles to be apparent, in the patience with which we undergo trials for the Lord's sake), worketh hope. It worketh the hope of that reward through the mercies of God, which is laid up for them to whom our Blessed Saviour also has thus promised it; "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Let us however, my brethren, not rest satisfied with searching out thus the real import of any passage in the Holy Scriptures. But let us be careful to apply it also to our own improvement. Such patience is required of us all; and it must be shewn in other ways, than those of which the words commonly suggest the idea.

We usually think of suffering only, and of unshrinking steadfastness under afflictions, and of even temper under provocations, when we use the word. And doubtless it is applicable, most strictly applicable, to them.

But there is another matter, in which it is no less required, though far less commonly shewn. And that is in submitting to the restraints, which holiness and godliness of living demand; and to the privations, which they will frequently require at our hands. Patience to submit our unruly passions and appetites and inclinations to such

restraints, worketh proof,* not less than suffering under persecution.

But it is in different times, and under different circumstances, that we are called to give those proofs of our true profession of christianity, whether by patience under torments, and death; or by patience under temptation from our own passions; or by patience under taunts, and ridicule, and that evil name, which is given by an evil world to its opposers.

It is easy enough to imagine situations of danger, in the quiet of our own homes; and then and there, to determine how resolutely we would endure, and how gloriously our patience should in such cases give evidence to our faith. But well we know, that no such circumstances have befallen us. Well we know, that the fiery trial, under which the patience of the primitive Christians gave evidence to their fortitude through faith, may never occur. We may never be put to such proof.

* δοκιμην.

It is against that which constantly occurs, that we have need to keep ourselves armed and ready. It is against that, which threatens presently to come upon us, and not merely in the creations of our own imagination, that we have need to stand upon our guard. Whatever may be the case hereafter (which no mortal can presume to say), yet at the present time, the proof which our patience must give, is under the tribulation of evil society from without, and of evil dispositions within.

How then does our patience endure, when called to deny the world, and refuse its indulgencies, at this season for instance; when called thus to deny ourselves, and refuse them for conscience sake? How does it prove, that it can set at nought the sneers and scoffs of an ungodly and luxurious society; when the ancient custom of the church of Christ demands this? And it has so done throughout this season of penitence, and preparation of the heart.

Have you had such godly patience (my brethren) as to endure even that short measure of self-denial, for the Lord's sake?— Have you proved, that you had patience to see others following their dissipations and festivities; their courses of heedless gaiety and splendid luxury; while you were studying to acquire the habit, of “keeping under the body and bringing it into subjection?”

If so it have been with you, blessed has been the patience, which has thus given real and practical evidence of your christian faith. If not; remember, I beseech you, that there is but one hope which maketh not ashamed: but one, of which we shall not be ashamed in the great and terrible day of the Lord. And that is the hope in Christ, which they are authorised, through his mercy, to entertain, who rest not on name nor professions nor imaginary privileges; as the Jewish converts were too much disposed to do. But they are authorised to hold it who can prove they have put on

the spirit of Christ, and conformed themselves to his pattern. They are authorised to hold it, who have crucified, and do yet crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof.

The remainder of the Apostle's discourse here turns upon the infinite love of Christ, in having laid down his life for us. He urges us to the consideration of that act of unspeakable kindness;* an act such as scarcely any man could be brought to do for his best and kindest friend; but which he, in his infinite mercy, did for us, while we were in a state of wrath, and of hostility to him and to his holiness—"While we were yet enemies Christ died for us."

If then such has been his love shewn toward us; what love, what return of thankfulness and obedience, are we not bounden to make to him? This is ever the object of St. Paul's discourses, on that which our

Blessed Redeemer has done for man; and unless we so apply that which he has said, his preaching is to us vain, and our faith is also vain—We are yet in our sins.

There remains nothing of real difficulty in the rest of this chapter, with which we must close our enquiries into this epistle for the present year. That passage which says, “The law entered that the offence might abound;” * evidently points to no dispensation of severity on the part of God. It states only that the enactment of law, had, as a natural consequence, caused more acts to be accounted for offences, than would otherwise, by man, have been considered as such. And this is said generally; not of the law of Moses alone, but of the divine law in general, for the accurate translation of the passage is *without* the article.† “Law (not *the* law) entered” so “that the offence might abound.”

*20 v.

† Νομος παρεισηλθεν ινα πλεοναση, &c.

The natural consequence of the existence of a divine law, is stated by the Apostle. But it is not stated with a view to condemnation. It is to shew forth the richness of divine grace through Jesus Christ: the benefits of which (he is careful again to impress this) are extended to all, in spite of that criminality in regard to the strictness of divine law: to which law we are, in justice, liable. They are extended, in spite of our infirmities and imperfections and failures; "through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

What then, as he asks elsewhere, shall separate us from the love of Christ? What, when so great privileges have been extended to us, shall render them fruitless, and make the grace of God of none effect? Something there is (my brethren) which too manifestly does produce "such lamentable, such fatal fruits. Something there is, which, though it do not, and cannot make void the purposes of the Father, nor the mercies of our

Redeemer; does throw too many into such a condition, in regard to his holy covenant of grace, that the promise becomes, as to them, of none effect.

It is not that their faith itself, so far as they have it, is made void; but it is that what they call faith is void in itself: that they have little in them which really deserves to be called faith. A mere empty name and profession, is of necessity void in itself; void of any claim or hope grounded on the promises of the Almighty.

And now is the time, above all others that ever have been within our recollection; when we are all called, within our holy church, to stir up the grace of God which is upon us. Now are we called to be most visibly, and manifestly, and particularly careful, that we receive not the grace of God in vain; and that we attempt not to rely on the mere name, without the substance of christianity. If ever it was needful, that the purity of our profession should be shewn

forth in our lives, the time is now at hand; nay, it has actually come upon us.

And shall we now sit down in indolence, giving a fatal and ruinous example, to them who will be but too ready to follow it? Shall we not exert ourselves, to make manifest that beauty of holiness which belongs to our belief and worship, by our lives and conversation? Shall we not give that most effectual, because most intelligible of all modes of contradiction, to them who revile our national religion, and say that it is not the true faith of our Lord Jesus Christ?

St. Paul strictly enjoined his converts, to give none occasion to the enemies of our Lord to blaspheme. Let us then be careful to abide by his warning.

To blaspheme, does not in that place mean that which we commonly call blasphemy. It does not mean only outrageous curses, and open dishonour done to the name and attributes of God. The Apostle uses the word here in its original sense: which is, when

simply considered, to speak evil (to whatever that evil may be applied). His converts lived among bigotted Jews, or idolatrous Gentiles. He therefore exhorts them so to live, that their profession of a faith, which they (the Jews and heathens) opposed, might not be such as to give countenance, to the things which they would speak against that faith. And so he reproaches the Romans,* "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you."

The days have come, my brethren, when enough, and more than enough will probably be found, to revile our holy protestant faith, if they can see any thing in the lives of its avowed followers, on which to fix the imputation of unholiness. The days have come, when nothing can safely be neglected; whether of the outward, or of the inward part, of Protestant Christianity. The days have come, when we must bear in mind

* ii. 24.

both parts of our Blessed Saviour's injunction, with more, in regard to many, than their usual attention in passed times, "Make clean first the inside, &c. that the outside may be clean also."

Nor can such cleansing and such care be spared, either in one part, or the other. Great is their delusion, who imagine, that they can stand in safety, on their freedom from all intention to do dishonour to God, or (which comes to the same thing) to religion; whether it be outward and visible religion, or inward, and witnessed only by their own conscience. The latter indeed all men know to be, as it were, the essence, the very spring, and root, of all that is good in its fruits. But let not the faith of our fathers be put to shame, by the refusal of the children to conform themselves to the outward ordinances also, to those of self-restraint, and mortification. Let not that, which was intended to be an *open* profession, of our desire to be found obedient to the rules

and institutions of godly living according to the gospel of Christ; be neglected for the sake of any evil ways, and ungodly dissipations. Such will ever tempt us to indulgence; but they will bring reproach on that religion, which we all profess, at least, to venerate.

It is by the lives and conversations of those who call themselves children of the church of this land, that the rules and doctrines and faith of that church, will, by very many persons, be judged. It was so, when first the errors of a corrupt church were abandoned, it was so, that those errors were then most easily made to be visible. The defect was shewn and seen first of all, in the unholy manner of living which appeared in the conduct of very many among its sons, and its advocates.

The reformed churches on the contrary, were then careful to maintain good works; and by them to shew the purity of the belief which produced them.

This test is not indeed (for there will be hypocrites); it is not unerring in its operation. But it will generally guide to a right judgment, and can hardly fail of being applied to us. The teaching of our Saviour was, "Ye shall know them (that is the persons professing true doctrine) by their fruits;" and that rule will be strictly applicable so far as the persons, in every case.

But in order to judge of the doctrine itself much more than single cases must be observed. The general tendency, and the usual effect of the whole must be kept in view; as well as the conformity of the teaching with that revealed word, from whence alone the real rules of righteousness before God can be drawn.

But still we must bear in mind, that it is not inward holiness alone (though that be undoubtedly the first, and the fundamental matter); it is not that *alone* which will suffice. The "beauty of holiness," must also be made to appear; if we would not have

the true and pure doctrine of our Saviour to be blasphemed, and evil reputed, through us; and on account of our departure from that which we profess to follow:

Remember then, my brethren, that both we, and the form of faith and worship, and the doctrines which we hold as the true doctrines of the Christian Religion, are now especially, put, as it were, upon their trial. If we will not endure to deny ourselves, for the sake of that Lord whom we profess to follow; will it not be concluded that we are led by a mode of belief, which does not require us to walk in his footsteps? If we, with all our means of knowledge in divine things, refuse to “keep under the body and bring it into subjection;” shall it not naturally be concluded, that we do not pursue the way of Him, whose holy word by his Apostle teaches us plainly and positively so to do? If we be found “lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God;” shall not the ignorant be ensnared through our laxity of

practice? And will they not naturally be led to believe, that they who so do, and yet profess to follow the faith of Christ, are not rightly following it? How dreadful! How terrible shall be the account, which they must render up to the Judge of the spirits of all flesh;—*they*, I say, through whose unbridled and unauthorised liberty, the weak brother, for whom Christ died, shall thus be drawn in to perish!

My brethren, another year of probation will pass, before we meet again to continue these lectures in this holy place; if indeed we ourselves be allowed to see that day, or to meet any where on earth, at that season. If then there be any virtue among us; or if any praise which the Almighty can bestow, be really held in estimation with us; “think on these things.”

Great is our responsibility; and the Lord alone knoweth when we must, each one of us render up an account of our stewardship. Remember, that if we would not be made

accountable for the misguidance of others, by our example; we must learn well and carefully, even in outward deportment, to guide our own ways. If we would not do dishonour to the religion which we profess, before the face of its adversaries; we must honour it in their sight; by more strict, and attentive following of it, in all; though it be unpalatable to the lusts of the flesh; in all, I say, which it requires.

So may the Almighty bless us, and preserve us pure and spotless, in his service! And, in his good time, so may He bring us to his everlasting rest, as those who, shall have fought the good fight of faith; through Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate!

FINIS.

